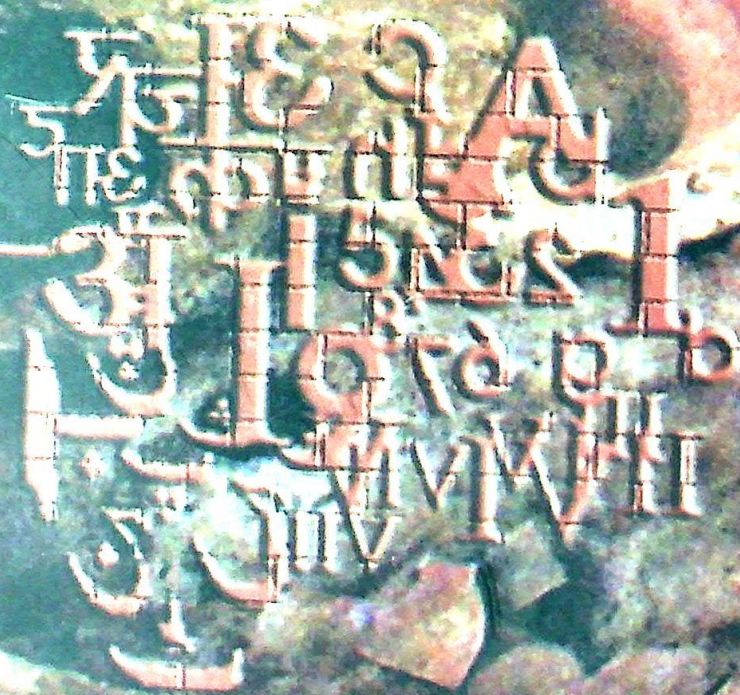


# Society and Languages in Northern India

Shamsher Singh Narula





The purpose of this book is to bring to an end the isolation of Indian historical studies from Indian linguistics. India's heritage of linguistic speculations is unique in its profuseness. These linguistic categories have, as no where else, formed the core of many intellectual and societal accruements. The author has made use of these to unravel some mysteries of India's hoary past and to pinpoint the root cause of stagnant nature of Indian society.

The book discusses how the abundant accretion of linguistic doctrines and the plethora of Hindu deities hived on the Indian social plant and the manner in which these determined the making of northern Indian society and languages.

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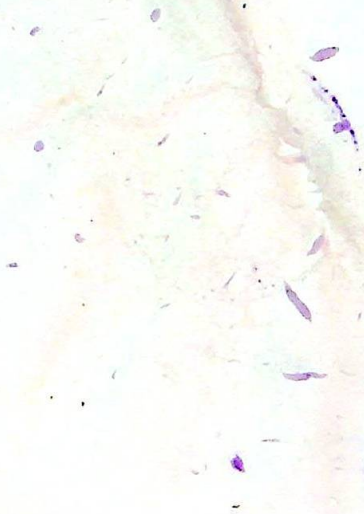




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SHAMSHER SINGH NARULA



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To  
My wife  
Dr. Ranjit Kaur  
and  
daughter  
Dr. Punit Kaur



## BY THE SAME AUTHOR

### English

A trilogy evaluating Indian Independence

Laughter in a Cage

The Man Who Stole Rainbow

Woman Who Sold Tears

### Hindi

Ek Pankhuri ki Tez Dhar (Novel)

Andheray men Bhatakti Kiran (Novel)

Aadhi Raat ka Suraj (Short Stories)

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# FOREWORD

This book is a pioneering attempt to utilize Indian philology and mythology to enrich the understanding of India's historical past. It offers new material on India's prehistory based upon the author's visit, some years ago, to Baghdad and Ninevah Museums and other archaeological sites in Iraq. Recent advances in archaeology, anthropology and paleoclimatology have also been made use of while discussing some problems of Indian prehistory.

This book also contains selections from Shamsher Singh Narula's writings on Indian Linguistics which were commended for their erudition and were regarded as the most significant work on the subject since Grierson. These have been out of print for a long time.

The phenomenal expansion of Linguistics in the postwar period is one of the most exciting chapters in modern intellectual history and its methodology is being increasingly utilized in various disciplines. This is all the more essential in the case of Indian social history because India's linguistic heritage is unique in its profuseness.

PUBLISHER



## PREFACE

Out of the many sciences and arts which have expanded the human mind, the one which is today receiving great attention is Linguistics. The entire nature of language is being re-examined as it has seldom been since Plato. Many sciences are now examining how the seed of language got planted in early man and how possessed of speech and possessed by speech man broke free from the silence of matter. Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Biolinguistics, Linguistic Mathematics and some other disciplines are so recent that there is not yet the needed clarity about their scope. The manner in which the convergence of the various sciences is taking place is evidenced by the 'Handbook of Mathematical Psychology' which has three chapters on Linguistics.

Before the Second World war the only discipline making proper use of Linguistics was Anthropology and all great Anthropologists were great Linguists. Now more and more sciences are recognizing the relevance of Linguistics for their study and are making valuable contribution to the understanding of language and to the expansion of the field of linguistic studies.

Anthropology showed that it was not family life—gibbons live in single monogamous families father, mother, young ones—or collective labour which made language develop in society like a pearl in a shell. They established that language as a symbolic system got evolved along with totem, ritual, myth, etc., that many of the basic grammatical elements were ritual and therefore pre-lingual in origin and that the logic of myths was as rigorous as that of science.

Biology showed that language is a "species-specific



behavior", a social practice which grows organically out of the biological nature of man. Human brain is not an ape's brain enlarged as Darwin had maintained. Its structure is unique, markedly different from that of other animals. The extreme variety of the capacity of sound production among human races shows that the evolution of nervous structure underlying speech was relatively stabilized before the organs of breathing, chewing and eating acquired additionally functions as organs of speech. Thus the human brain at a very early stage of man's pre-history acquired the capacity to classify, analyse and to interpret information, and to invent and to frame into a conceptual scheme what he beheld in the material word. In learning to transmit this experience to the new generation, man grasped his earliest grammatical concept, the future tense, which became the core of his mutinous relation with nature.

A great linguist Otto Jespersen said in 1924 : "Psychology should assist us in understanding what is going on in the mind of the speaker, and more particularly how they are led to deviate from the previously existing rules in consequence of conflicting tendencies." Now the psychologists have started taking serious interest in the cognitive processes that language entails. They have begun to recognise that language is closely connected with psychological life and from the very beginning it is psychology in action. They have begun to examine how man was able to evolve mind which became the focus of consciousness. Language is the instrument through which man elaborated the world of mind into which he entered and in which he realised his characteristic destiny. Through the conceptual tool of language man was able to break asunder the barriers of time and space which no other animal was able to do and by means of language he later elaborated concretely for himself the various parts of his mental work in sciences, history, religion, geography, literature, mathematics, etc.



Linguistics has thus come to occupy a position of centrality in the world of learning. However, one sphere of knowledge which has not fully realised the relevance of Linguistics is social history even though the two subjects are most intimately related to each other. Linguistic evolution is directly dependent on historical circumstances. There is nothing contradictory in the two statements that language created society and social life gave birth to language, both underline the dialectic connection between the two. History cannot be properly understood without Linguistics because language is at once the prototype of cultural phenomena and also the phenomenon whereby all the forms of social life are established and perpetuated. How life and thought grow together in a language is borne out by the maxim that if we speak Chinese we would have even a different sense of hearing, smell and touch.

In India Linguistics is not only relevant but most essential to a proper understanding of history, culture and social life. It is not fortuitous that India has the richest heritage of linguistic speculations in the world. The appearance of Indian Linguistics became possible because India as no other culture had a ritual science which singled out the categories of symbolic thinking. The ritual origin of many linguistic categories is a great advantage because it helps in discovering the relations and structures of the abysmal zones of consciousness. Indian linguistic analysis has been structural from the very beginning, since it started from symbolic expressions borrowed from rites analysis. By confronting the mythical and linguistic structures, the Structural Linguists today have gone the same way the ancient Indian Linguists covered, although in an opposite direction.

The purpose of this book is to bring to an end the present isolation of Indian historical studies from Indian Linguistics and to utilize it to unravel some of the mysteries of India's historic and pre-historic past. This is a task beset with many



difficulties, particularly for a person who is not a Linguist by profession, who is a man of letters and a writer of literary works. Moreover this is a work which can properly be undertaken not by individuals but by institutions and academies. In any case, time has come when a beginning has to be made for unless Indian Linguistics is studied to throw light on the dark corners of Indian history our understanding of the origins of our civilization and of our social polity will remain far from authentic and complete.

S.S.N



## INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION : WHAT CAUSED ITS DECLINE ?

Summarizing the causes of the sudden extinction of the Indus Valley Civilization, Benjamin Walker states thus in 'Hindu World—An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism'

"There has been much speculation as to the causes that brought about the end of the Indus Valley Civilization. The alteration in the course of the Indus river may have been one factor. It is known that Mohenjodaro was destroyed, chiefly by inundation from the Indus, and rebuilt no less than seven times. It could be that a final cataclysmic flood overwhelmed the whole area. Climatic changes, an epidemic or pestilence have also been suggested as possible factors. But the bulk of scholarly opinion leans to the view that peaceful and prosperous cities of the Indus Valley were sacked by successive hordes of Aryan barbarians from the Iranian highlands who came with deadlier weapons and stronger arms. The populace of the walled towns were not warlike and had poor defences. Mohenjodaro was sacked and pillaged and its inhabitants slain without mercy. Groups of skeletons of men, women and children, in contorted attitudes, found in the houses and the streets, tell all too plainly that the end of this flourishing civilization was abrupt and savage".<sup>1</sup>

Referring to Vedic Aryans Benjamin Walker observes:

- 
1. 'Hindu World' by Benjamin Walker, George Allen & Unwin, London under the heading 'Indus Valley'



"Not for nothing was the epithet 'Puramdara' (sacker of cities) conferred on Indra, for like Huns, Goths and other barbarian hordes, the Aryans left in their wake a trail of smouldering towns and villages. From the Rig Veda we learn of the slaughter and devastation of the great Indian tribes of yore. Uritsa was 'devoured', Bala was overthrown, the seven cities, the cities of Pipru were razed, the fortress of Sushna levelled, the hundred castles of Sambara shattered, the hundred cities of Vangrira sacked, the treasure of Anhas cut off, the kingdoms of Chamuri, Dhuni and Kolara decimated, and the loot in horses and cattle, carts and chariots, gold and jewels taken from the desolated and devastated towns and forts, was distributed as booty among the marauders. In Aryan eyes the Dasyus were heathens and therefore enemies fit to be destroyed; they were created for the sole purpose of being destroyed; and the instruments of war were especially devised for the purpose of encompassing their destruction."<sup>2</sup>

Evidence from Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets regarding the tragic end of the Sumerian Kingdom of Ur, during more or less the same period, has been used to support the contention that Indus Valley civilization had a similar sudden and tragic end. The tablet containing 'The Lamentation over Sumer and Ur' states:

"To overturn the appointed times, to obliterate the divine plans, the storms gather to strike like a flood. (The gods) An, Enlil, Enki and Ninhursag have decided its fate to overturn the divine powers of Sumer....to destroy the city..

On that bloody day mouths were crushed. On that day heaven rumbled, the earth trembled, the storm worked without respite....There were corpses floating in the Euphrates, brigands roamed the roads....In Ur people were

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2. Ibid: Under the heading 'Anarya'



smashed as if they were clay pots.....".<sup>3</sup>

There is now an increasing body of evidence among archaeologists and paleoclimatologists that Bronze Age civilizations from Minoan in Crete to Mohenjodaro and Harappa in West India perished not because of any pillage and ravage but as a result of long drought which lasted over three hundred years before 2000 B.C.

British archaeologist James Mellaart was the first to suggest in 1966, that a long drought could possibly be the cause of the extinction of a wide range of third-millennium civilizations from early Bronze Age communities in Palestine and pyramid builder Old Kingdom in Egypt to Akkadian Empire of northern Mesopotamia and Mohenjodaro civilization of the Indus Valley.

Later Harvey Weiss, Professor of near Eastern Archaeology at Yale discovered in the course of his work in northern Mesopotamian region called Habur Plains that there had sprouted there a network of urban centers sustained by highly productive organized agriculture since 4000 B.C. Then around 2200 B.C., the urban population of the region suddenly fled the place and deserted their cities for centuries.

On the basis of the evidence provided by his excavations at Habur, Weiss concluded that it was as a result of a drought which lasted three hundred years. He also felt that such a long drought could not have been just a local event. He began to look for evidence of widespread climatic changes during that period in the entire Euro-Asian region from Europe to north Africa and southern Asia. He felt that all the civilizations of these regions collapsed during those three hundred years of drought. Later an analysis of ice cores of

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3. From a preserved tablet in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.C.C.F. Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL) [www.etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk](http://www.etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk)



Greenland—"which offer the most detailed record of global climatic changes"—revealed unusual climatic conditions at about 2200 B.C. that could well have resulted in drought in the regions in question.

Harvey Weiss first propounded his views in 1993 when he noticed in the course of his archaeological work in the Habur plains of northern Mesopotamia at Tell Leilan that the excavations for three hundred years near about 2200 B.C. showed evidence of desertion and mud bricks walls fallen on clay floor were covered with three hundred years of compacted dust. Tell Leilan city was from 200 to 250 acres (as compared to about 500 acres of the Harappan city) and showed signs of abandonment and not of ravage. In the lengthy composition in cuneiform texts called 'Curse of Akkad' there were references to 'large fields' that 'produced no grain' and of clouds that 'produced no rain'. Scholars had taken these as mere metaphors. Professor Weiss asserted that these were documentation of the drought.

When Professor Weiss started looking for other evidence in support of his views, it was not difficult for him to find it.

In 1994 Gerry Lemoke of the Swiss Technical University in Zurich had analyzed sediment cores taken from the bottom of Lake Van in Turkey, situated at the headwater of Tigris and Euphrates rivers. He discovered that the volume of water in the lake, which was indicative of the amount of rainfall in the whole of western Asia, abruptly declined in 2200 B.C. At the same time the dust blown by the wind in the lake increased five fold.

Professor Weiss sought the help of Marie-Agnes Courty of the National Centre of Scientific Research in France in evaluating his own conclusions about the Tell Leilan excavations. Ms. Courty endorsed Professor Weiss' views and found that a section from 2200 to 1900 B.C. showed



evidence of severe drought including an eight inch thick layer of wind blown sand with a marked absence of earthworm tunnels.

There were still many skeptics. Richard Zettler, curator of the Near East Section of the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, disagreeing with Professor Weiss observed: "I do not agree with his literal reading of the Mesopotamian texts, and I think he has exaggerated the extent of abandonment in this time period.....There are lots of questions on how to read these texts—how much of this is just literary license....Even if there is a core of historical truth, it's hard to determine what the core of truth is."

Greenland Ice Sheet project 2 [GISP 2] had graphed temperatures over Greenland by tracking oxygen isotope ratios within the ice cores for the past 15,000 years. A black line squiggle at the bottom of the graph ended 11,700 years ago when the last Ice Age ended and Holocene, the current warm era began. The paleoclimatologists had found the Holocene period as climatically stable and did not think that any noteworthy change in temperature had taken place during the period after 15,000 B.C. When Harvey Weiss discussed his theory with Peter deMenocal of Lemont-Doherty Earth Observatory of the Columbia University, he agreed to study the Holocene period in detail. He together with Paul Mayewski of the University of New Hampshire in Durham looked for the Mesopotamian drought in the GISP 2 climatic record. To verify the 2200 B.C. drought Mayewski used tests based on 2.5 year intervals in the climatic record of 50 to 100 and uncovered a new Holocene. He also reconstructed patterns of atmospheric movements over land and oceans and found that air transport from south to north in the Atlantic—so called meridional circulation—hit a significant winter low some 4200 years ago. Mayewski concluded: "We can definitely show from our records that



2200 B.C. event is unique. And what is much more exciting than that, we can show that most major turning points in civilization in western Asia also correlate with what we would say would be dry events. We think we have found a proxy for aridity in western Asia."

It was felt by Weiss and deMenocal that if a large-scale drought had occurred, it would have left a mark in the sediments of the nearby ocean floors—for example in the floor of the Gulf of Oman seven hundred miles south east of Mesopotamia. German scientists had a sediment core from the Gulf of Oman and deMenocal found that they already had enough information to substantiate Weiss' formulation. It was found that exactly 2200 B.C. there was a big spike of dolomite—five fold increase over three centuries. The chemistry of the dolomite dust matched that of the dolomite in the Mesopotamian mountains.

Summing up the above data, Professor Weiss stated: "It seems on the basis of the paleoclimatic data that there is no doubt about the event at 2200 B.C." Three hundred years of drought saw the collapse of Indus Valley civilization just as it brought about the end of other civilizations in southern Europe and western Asia.

Mohenjodaro was destroyed by inundation from the Indus and rebuilt at least seven times. In Egypt when inundation from Nile destroyed one prehistoric Dynasty, before long another Dynasty emerged to carry forward the torch of civilization. When Akkad was destroyed in upper Mesopotamia, Ur Dynasty came to birth a few hundred miles to the south on Euphrates. It might be Harappa and Mohenjodaro came into existence at two different periods of prehistory separated like Akkad and Ur by a few centuries. However, there is now less probability about its end through war and violence. There is a reasonable possibility that it was the result of the drought which covered all area affected by Mediterranean currents.



It is not intended here to speculate about the script and language(s) of the Indus Valley civilization and add to the confusion about it that already abounds. It will, however, be pertinent to mention two points in this connection.

The first is that language, no doubt, is a semantic system par excellence but in ancient societies there were other systems which performed equally important semantic functions. Interpreting society as a whole in terms of theory of communication, anthropologists have pointed out that in ancient societies communication operated at three different levels. The rules of kinship and marriage served to ensure circulation of women between groups, economic rules served to ensure the circulation of goods and services and the linguistic rules the circulation of messages. Communication, thus operated at three different levels, communication of women through kinship system, communication of goods and services and communication of messages—from marriage and kinship systems to language one passed from low to high speed communication. Social anthropologists hold that kinship phenomenon in ancient societies is of the same type as linguistic phenomenon. Operating side by side in a society, the three communication systems give it stability and subtlety, enabling it to adapt to environment and also to change it. Different type of communication systems in the same society, that is, kinship and the language are caused by identical unconscious structures. Although they belong to another order of society, kinship phenomenon are of the same type as linguistic phenomenon. Like phonemes kinship terms are elements of meaning. To underline the interrelationship of these three forms of communication, Kroeber and other anthropologists have pointed out that the Chinese and the Indo-European languages are as completely different from each other as are the kinship systems in the two countries. Without keeping this point in mind it will be impossible to unravel the secret of the Indus Valley



language(s).

If the kinship system is not Aryan, it will be futile to try to decipher Mohenjodaro script as some proto Aryan language. There was in the Baghdad Museum, Iraq (exhibit No. I.M. 19654) statue of a woman with Dravidian features, wearing a sari similar that of an Indian woman of today. Social anthropologists have pointed out that where the dress of women is transmitted and not of the men, it is indicative of a matrilineal society. Rig Vedic society was definitely not matrilineal.

The second point is that Indus Valley was most likely polyglot and multi-cultural as were most of the Middle East ancient civilizations. Mesopotamian scribes of the third millennium spoke and read Sumerian, Akkadian (the Semitic ancestor languages of Babylon and Assyria) and sometimes a third language as well. Shulgi, king of the Sumerian city of Ur and a great patron of learning, claims to have spoken no fewer than five. The texts speak of interpreters (including one for 'Meluhhans' i.e. people from the Indus Valley). Sumerians described themselves as 'the black headed ones.' When and from where they came and settled near the Euphrates has been debated for almost a century but without any clear consensus. The world of ancient Near East was a mosaic of disparate languages and cultures. It shows evidence of extensive contact over very large distances. There is evidence of trade between Mesopotamia and Indus Valley especially along the Gulf. It will be a mistake to disclaim the assistance many known and some unknown cuneiform writings can provide in deciphering Indus Valley script and depend only on the Vedic texts for this as has become the practice among some Indologists. Efforts to decipher Indus Valley script might become more fruitful if we do not start with the presumption that it relates to a single language only.



The above does not suggest the possibility that Indus Valley civilization was copy of some experiment in Mesopotamia. Like most of the pre-historic civilizations it was the result of synoecism. As the material conditions became propitious, villages grew and grouped round one of them which turned into a city. In most of these places there was independent invention of agriculture and an independent invention of civilization. First there was stimulus to civilization, contact and borrowing was a later phenomenon.

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**Source**—Review articles in DISCOVER and NEW YORK REVIEW published during 1998 and 2002.



## NATURE OF PREVEDIC INDIAN SOCIETY

An enquiry into the linguistic history of India used to start with some preconceived notions which have fortunately been given up, though not yet completely. It has been accepted that Vedic and Sanskrit languages have large non-Aryan elements and racial and linguistic synthesis had mainly been achieved before 1000 B.C. Referring to this Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji observes :

"All this synthesising tendency has been induced and made easy of development by the great fact of the presence in the Indian scene, from very ancient times, of different people with their diverse languages and culture and modes of living and thinking...But the Dravidian is the most important of the non-Aryan elements in the civilization of India and the basic culture of India is certainly over 50% Dravidian, although expressed in the main through the Aryan language.

"There has been through some 3,000 years a gradual approximation of the Aryan speech towards the Dravidian, in its system of sounds, in its trend towards morphology, in vocabulary and, above all, in its syntax or order of words...

"It is remarkable how significant a Dravidian element we have in the Indo-Aryan languages from Vedic Sanskrit onwards, some of the commonest words of Indo-Aryan are from this source, showing the very deep and intimate influence exerted by Dravidian in transforming Indo-Aryan"<sup>1</sup>

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1. Suniti Kumar Chatterji : "The Indian Synthesis and Racial and Cultural Inter-Mixtures in India"—Tamil Culture, Madras, October-November 1959.



Historians of ancient India had to do a lot of rope walking in order to explain the presence of Dravidian and other non-Aryan elements in Vedic Sanskrit. After the discovery of Indus Valley civilization, these Dravidian elements were held to have come from these proto-Dravidians of East Mediterranean origin after they had been vanquished by the Vedic people, some of whom getting absorbed into Vedic society. It was also held that it were these Dravidian tribes which later migrated to South India. Later islands of Dravidian language similar to Bruihi in Baluchistan were discovered in other parts of India, and archaeological work brought to light many stages of Stone Age and Bronze Age civilizations in South India prior to the Vedic period. This resulted in the theory of North Dravidians existing as distinct from Southern Dravidians.<sup>2</sup>

There is now sufficient evidence available of a long period of prosperous settlements in South India having trade links with ancient Egypt, ancient Middle East and Indus Valley. E.Hultzsch in his "Remarks on a Papyrus from Oxyrrhincus" explained some unmeaning sentences found in the fragments of a Greek drama in a North Egyptian manuscript of the 2nd century A.D. as old Kannada. How

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2. Thomas Burrow states : "The comparative cessation of accession of Dravidian words in the Indo-Aryan vocabulary is an indication that the extensively spoken Dravidian of North India, from which the major part of the Dravidian element in Sanskrit is derived, had by that time been generally replaced by Indo-Aryan... it is also significant, during this later period, that the Southern Dravidian languages do not exert any major influence on Indo-Aryan, from which it is evident that they cannot have done so during the earlier period when contact between these Dravidians and Indo-Aryans was very slight. We are left therefore with only one assumption, namely, of an extensive occupation of Dravidian speakers of some of the primary areas of Aryan settlement."—Indo-Aryan Culture, New Delhi, Vol. VIII, No. 4, April 1960.



old these links between ancient Egypt and ancient South India are will be clear from the explanation for the word *Per-Aha* (pronounced in English as Pharaoh). Egyptian hieroglyphic for *aha* is the picture of a place. *Aha* occurs as a place sign in Minoan hieroglyphics also. Dravidian word *aha* from root *ahk* means house and by metonymy the person in the house, hence I. Per is *per* or *periya* in Tamil meaning great. referring to this H.S. David states : "Thus there is an unmistakable affinity between the Egyptian title and the two dravidian words, of which it is persumably composed."<sup>3</sup>

It has been pointed out that 'rice, peacock, sandalwood, every known article which we find imported by sea into Babylon before the fifth century B.C. brought with it a Dravidian and not Sanskrit designation'. Reference to Ophir and Tharshish two territories on the western coast of India is contained in Old Testament. King Solomon and King Hiram of Tyre imported from Ophir, apart from gold and precious stones, almug—the red sandalwood of Peninsular India. The gold mouth pieces embossed with geometrical designs found at Enkomi in Cyprus in tombs of the late Bronze Age have their parallel only in the mouth pieces from Adichanallur in South India. Gold frontlets similar to Adichanallur have been found at Gaza and these date back to over 2000 B.C. Trident of iron or the three pronged fork discovered at Adichanallur has its exact replica among the tombs of the early Iron Age of the time of Solomon in Palestine. Finds similar to those in Adichanallur have been discovered from Nimrud, Wan and Ur. Crooke and Richard have suggested a philogenetic connection between one of the Nilgiri bronze vases and a gold bowl from Ur discovered by Woolley. It has been pointed out that the name Musiri belonging to a tribe to the north-east of Nineveh in North

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3. H.S. David : "Some Contacts and Affinities between the Egypto-Minoan and the Indo-(Dravido)-Sumerian Culture-Tamil Culture Madras, Vol. IV No.2 April 1955.



Iraq is almost the same as the ancient name Musiri of Cranganore, while the name Nairi, next door neighbours of Musiri is similar to the name of well-known caste in South India.<sup>4</sup>

Not only with the West Asia, with East Asia also, South India seemed to have had trade relations in prehistoric times. Chinese historical records mention maritime traders bringing typical South India products to China as far back as the seventh century B.C. This is confirmed by the discovery in the Philippines of a number of Iron Age findings similar to the findings of the same period in South India.<sup>5</sup>

There is evidence available that centres of civilization existed in South India at the time of the Indus Valley cities of Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Lothal. Mohenjodaro gold was almost certainly an import from the goldfields of Mysore<sup>6</sup> where have been found clusters of Neolithic settlements contemporary with Indus Valley civilization. Silver could have come from the Kadappa-Kurnool region. In view of the immense labour involved in the process of mining gold and silver during primitive times, it is probable that these settlements were bigger than those found in the Indus Valley.

The number of slaves employed in the Attic mines, we

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4. c.f. Nilakanta Shastri : "A History of South India," Oxford University Press, Madras.
5. Radhakrishnan : "South India and China", Bombay 1947.
6. Bridget and Raymond Allchin : "Much of the Indus Gold is of light colour indicating high silver content, or rather that it is unrefined 'electrum'. This suggests that it originated from the reefs of Mysore rather than from panning, and the possibility is certainly not discouraged by the number of Neolithic settlements which are reported from Mysore, particularly clustering around the Hatti gold bands." (The Birth of Indian Civilization).



are told by Diodores, ran into tens of thousands. Diodores' account<sup>7</sup> of the conditions in the gold mines of Egypt shows that the number of slaves working there was several times more. Thousands upon thousands of slaves and prisoners were employed there at each stage. Making shafts, hewing with iron picks the shining marble reefs in the bowels of the earth, collecting and carrying outside of the shining stones, breaking them on stone mortars into small pieces, grinding these on grindstones into fine powder, each stage required multitudes of labourers working without intermission under the pitiless lash of thousands of overseers, assisted by an equally large force to manage and enforce this system of oppression and exploitation.

A society which requires slave labour on such a vast scale would no doubt have a large population, though a

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7. Diodoros (3.11) : "On the borders of Egypt, and in the adjacent districts of Arabia and Ethiopia, there are many large gold mines worked intensively at great expense of misery and money. The rock is black with reefs and veins of marble so dazzling white that it outshines everything. This is where the gold is prepared by the overseers of the mine with a multitude of labourers. To these mines, the Egyptian kings send condemned criminals, captives in war, also those who have fallen victim to false accusations or been imprisoned for incurring the royal displeasure, sometimes with all their kinsfolk.... There they throng in chains, all kept at work continuously day and night... Where the gold bearing rock is very hard it is first burnt with fire, and when it has been softened sufficiently to yield to their efforts, thousand upon thousand of these unfortunate wretches are set to work on it with iron stone-cutters... The strongest of those assigned to this luckless labour hew the marble with iron picks. There is no skill in it, only force. The shafts are not cut in straight lines but follow the veins of the shining stone. Where the day light is shut out by the twists and turns of the quarry, they wear lamps tied to their foreheads, and there, contorting their bodies to fit the contours of the rock, they throw the quarried fragments to the ground, toiling on and on without intermission under the pitiless overseer's lash. Young children descend the



great majority of them would be slaves and prisoners. In the Bronze Age, South India seems to have been one of the major sources of gold and silver for the civilizations of Middle East and Indus Valley.<sup>8</sup> Other articles which probably went from South India to Indus Valley and Middle East were lead, agate and onyx from Godavari, Krishna and Bhima river beds, rock crystal from Godavari basin and Hyderabad, chalcedony from Vishakapatnam district, sapphire from Malabar, Salem and Cauvery basin, emerald from Padiyur and Kangayam in Coimbatore district and

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shafts into the bowels of the earth, laboriously gathering the stones as they are thrown down, and carrying them into the open air at the shaft head, where they are taken from them by men over thirty years, each receiving a prescribed amount, which they break on stone mortars with iron pestles into pieces small as a vetch. Then they are handed over to women and older men, who lay them on rows of grindstones, and standing in groups of two and three they pound them to powder as fine as the best wheaten flour. No one could look at the squalor of these wretches, with not even a rag to cover their loins, without feeling compassion for their plight. All alike are kept at their labour by the lash, until, overcome by hardships they die in their torments. Their misery is so great that they dread what is to come more than the present, punishments are so severe, and death is welcomed as a thing more desirable than life."

8. South India's trade with ancient Middle East could have been through the western coast of India. One such place mentioned in the Biblical record is Ophir, modern village Sopara near Bombay, which Karla cave inscriptions of second century B.C. refer to as Soparaka. Father Heras has hinted that *Magan* of the Sumerian cuneiform documents was likely to have been India. ("The Kingdom of Magan" B.C. Law, volume I). Leemans has identified *Meluhha* with western India, including Sind and Saurashtra ("The Trade Relations of Babylon"—Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient Vol. III April 1960). There is detailed discussion elsewhere in this treatise on *Meluhha* and *Magan*, two territories with which, according to cuneiform writings, ancient Mesopotamia had regular trade relations.



tourmaline—*ligurius* of the Bible—from a number of sources from the Peninsula. All this provides ground for the assumption that the population of South India during those times would be larger than that of the Indus Valley.

The above also shows that the Dravidians in the South had developed some pattern of civilization long before the Rig Vedic Aryans entered India and that the Dravidians who imparted Dravidian elements to Vedic and Sanskrit language were different from those living in South India before the coming of the Aryans. Panini does not seem to be aware of South India. He mentions Kalinga in the east and the southern-most point he mentions is Asmaka near the headwaters of Godavari. "The name *Pariyatra*" says Bhandarkar, "was given to the more northern and western portions of the (Vindya) range, from which the rivers Chambal and Betva take their rise, probably because it was situated on the boundary of their *yatra* or range of communication."<sup>9</sup>

In view of the above, there is no doubt that Dravidian tribal communities were living in North India in the pre-Rig Vedic times just as there were scores of other linguistic elements living in northern India at that time. *Dhangar*, a Dravidian language is extant today as far north as Nepal. Though at present there is much loose thinking about the discovery of sites contemporaneous with Harappa by the archaeology departments of various States and Universities, there is no denying the fact that numerous settlements at different stages of civilization existed throughout northern India during the pre-Vedic period, many of them conforming to the Harappan type.<sup>10</sup>

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9. Lectures on the Ancient History of India from 650 to 525 B.C. by D.R. Bhandarkar (Calcutta 1919).

10. Most of the recently written books on Ancient and Pre-historic India give list of pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan



It is now generally believed that when the Rig Vedic Aryans entered India there were proto-Dravidian tribes of East Mediterranean origin in India. Either they had already spread throughout northern India in the pre-Vedic period or they did so after the extinction of their civilizations in Indus Valley and Baluchistan. It is also maintained that these proto-Dravidian tribes had displaced Austric-speaking tribes which had in the preceding period settled in various parts of India. However, the Vedic literature and Hindu mythology bear witness to the simultaneous existence of diverse racial elements in northern India in the early Rig Vedic period. Hundreds of clans of each one of these racial groups then lived in different parts of northern India, sometimes in clusters and sometimes in isolation. These diverse tribal communities included not only East-Mediterranean Dravidian groups, Negroids, Austric and Sino-Tibetan clans but also pre-Rig Vedic Nordic (Aryan) clans. There were also clans belonging to pre-Gond and pre-Kol strata of population, survival of some elements of which till today has been referred to by Dr. Thomas Burrow.<sup>11</sup> Some glimpse of the nature of these tribes and the manner in which the mixing up of their languages took place through commingling and conflict is available in ancient Indian literature, quite often a later work enshrining the social memory of a period very much earlier than the earliest work, the Rig Veda.

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sequences which have been discovered by the Indian archaeologists in region after region of north-west India. Though these have been discovered generally in low rainfall areas of India, some Harappan sequences have been unearthed even in Bengal, the one discovered by the West Bengal Directorate of Archaeology near the site of the Farakka Barrage may be mentioned as an instance.

11. Thomas Burrow states : "Thus we find that two independent lines of investigation tend to converge. On the one hand the investigation of the Sanskrit vocabulary shows that while the influence of Dravidian is strong, and that of Munda not so strong



Discussing tribal geography of India as given in the Rig Veda, A.D. Pusalker writes : "Roughly speaking the extreme North-West was occupied by the Gandharis, Pakthas, Alinas, Bhatanases and Vishanins, some of whom probably contained non-Aryan elements. In Sind and the Panjab were settled the Sivas, Parsus, Kekayas, Vrichivants, Yadus, Anus, Turvasas and Druhyus. Further east towards the region of Madhyadesa were the settlements of the Tritsus, Bharatas, Purus and Srinjayas and the eastern-most part being in the occupation of Kikatas. The Matsyan and the Chedis were settled in the south of Panjab in the region of Rajputana and Malawa.<sup>12</sup>

The above list does not make any mention of Dasas and Dasyus, nor of Panis, the only Dasyu tribe mentioned by name in Rig Veda. Discussing these tribes Nanimadhab Chaudhuri states: "That the Rig Vedic tribes cannot be culturally distinguished from one another acquires special significance when it is found that racially they seem to have been a mixed people. We may take the case of the Purus.

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but nevertheless exists, we also have to assume the existence of other pre-Aryan languages and language families to account for the large number of unexplained words in Sanskrit. Correspondingly we have quoted research which have assumed the existence of non-Dravidian and non-Munda tribes in Central India, and have found support for this theory in the existence there of at least one language belonging to neither of these two groups. What goes for Central India was originally the case, no doubt, in northern and southern India, and the universal adoption of Indo-Aryan in the north and Dravidian in the South has covered up an original linguistic diversity". (Sanskrit and Pre-Aryan Tribes and Languages—Indo-Asian Culture, New Delhi, April 1960.)

12. A. D. Pusalker : 'Aryan Settlements in India' contributed to 'Vedic Age' Edited by Dr. Majumdar (Vol. 1 of the History and Culture of India).



They were undoubtedly a dark people. Compared with the Trtsu-Bharatas, who were probably fair, the Purus appear to have occupied a more important position in the Rig Vedic world than the Trtsu-Bharatas and they settled on the sacred Saraswati. The most elevated epithets in the Rig Veda are given to the Puru princes. If the Purus flourishing in the heart of the Rig Vedic world were a mixed people, one can understand that the race question was non-existent or had lost its importance to the Rig Vedic people"<sup>13</sup>

From the point of view of racial origins, Yadu is a much more interesting tribe of Rig Veda than the Purus. Yadus together with Turvasas are mentioned in the Rig Veda to have come from distant land and these are the only two tribes about whom this is mentioned. Bharadvaja (VI. 20.12; VI. 45.1.) mentions that these tribes came from across the seas. Kanva (I. 36.18) refers to their coming from a distant country. The Angiras (I. 54.61; I. 108.8) associates them with Panis and Anus but does not mention the tradition of their coming from distant land across the seas. Rig Veda also associates them with two famous but rarely mentioned Dasa chiefs, Navavastha and Brhadratha. Though these two tribes are mentioned quite frequently but only in a few hymns "a suspicion is aroused that there is something peculiar in the history of these two people."<sup>14</sup> In Rk. IV. 30.17 Rig Veda admits that Yadus and Turvasas were uninitiated and Indra made them worthy of initiation. The two tribes are associated with Kanva *rishi* which is an aboriginal name though traditional explanation for it is that he was born of a drop (*kana*) of perspiration that fell from the brow of god Surya during the churning of the ocean. The best known of the *rishi* in the Kanva line of *rishis* is

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13. Nanimadhab Chaudhuri : The Rig Vedic People—Calcutta Review, September 1953 to March 1954.

14. Ibid.



Narada. The various stories associated with him and his name *Kapi-Vaktra*, monkey face, shows that he was non-Aryan and probably monkey was the totem of his tribe.

A later legend clearly shows Yadu to be a non-Aryan. This legend relates that while sailing on the sea Yadu fell into the hands of Dhumavarna—smoke-coloured—a *Naga* king and that he was given the five daughters of the king in marriage. From these five *Naga* princesses sprang seven families known after Yadu as Yadavas, all classed as *daityas*. Later mythology connects Yadavas intimately with Prabhas Patan in Gujarat, where during Lord Krishna's<sup>15</sup> times, Kanva *rishi* Narada's curse on the descendants of Yadu was fulfilled. According to the legend the whole Yadava race then perished, some slain in a feud and the rest submerged by the sea. It seems that the Vedic Yadus came from Prabhas Patan by sea and, through the Sind river, reached Rig Vedic Panjab. Sites neighbouring Prabhas Patan have yielded a complete sequence from the Harappan down to the arrival of iron.

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15. Here is an instance where the social memory seems to have presented through mythology an inverted picture of reality as happens in a dream. The journey of the Yadus from Kathiawar to the Panjab and banks of the Jamuna during the Rig Vedic times was presented in later mythology as a journey in the opposite direction, under the leadership of Krishna.

From the innumerable conflicting mythological tales about Krishna, the fact of his being a non-Aryan is clear. One Krishna was a Dravidian god of Youth. A Vedic passage speaks of a leader of fifty thousand Krishnas, who was captured and slain together with all his pregnant wives so that he might leave no issue. This Krishna was "a hater of Brahmanic faith" who declared "I will surely cause the worship of cows through force if need be." (A.P. Karmarkar: "The Religions of India"). Another Krishna was an Assura chieftain of the Jamuna region who led a godless legion of ten thousand followers and caused great havoc until he was defeated and skinned by Indira.



Today a large population of Yadavas lives in South India. Even though the Madras High Court ruled in 1927 that Yadava was a Sudra caste, not only the *rajas* of Vijayanagar but many other Yadavas in South India claim to be kshatriyas. The possibility is there that the Yadus of the Rig Veda were Dravidian people like the Panis<sup>16</sup> and the Dasas sometimes mentioned along with as living in the east between the Ganges and Yamuna. It may be mentioned here that the name Pani is now believed to be derived from the Dravidian word *Panai*, the palmyra palm which was the totem of the Panis.<sup>17</sup> The palm grows in abundance along the Kathiawar-Gujarat coast.

This underlines the likelihood of Vedic society having many Dravidian and other non-Aryan tribes as its constituent part. Rig Veda also refers to settled communities far in the east. Praganda is referred to in Rk. III. 55.14 as the king of the Kikatas, the low born and later in Rk.VI. 1.159 Kikata is treated as synonym of Magadha. There is indirect reference to other tribes in East India. Tamba *rishi* says (Rk. X. 93.14) that he has recited hymns in praise of the gods for the wealthy kings Duhsima, Prithavana, Vena and Asur Rama. Rama of Ayodhia belonged to the tribe of Ikshvaku, having *ikshu*—sugar cane, an indigenous plant— as a totem, which

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16. Pani is the only Dasyu tribe mentioned by name in the Rig Veda. Aitareya Brahmana (VII.18) says that Dasyus descended from Rishi Vishwamitra. Manu (X. 45) says that exterior castes degraded by loss of rites are called Dasyus. Muir writes : "Though it is true that the late authorities regarded the Dasyus as degraded Aryan tribes who had not adopted Brahmanical institution...the term Dasyu could not have been applied in the earlier Vedic Era." Nanimadhab Chaudhuri adds : "We have the testimony of the text that sacrificial ritual distinguished the Aryas from the Dasyus who originally bore the designation of Arya."

17. Father Heras : "The Kingdom of the Magan" B.C. Law, Vol. I.



refers to the possibility of his being non-Aryan and thus to the Asur Rama and the Rama of Ayodhya being the same person. There is an interesting aspect of the story of Vena which provides mythological explanation for the *Nishada* and *Kolarian* racial groups. According to Mahabharata Vena prohibited all worship except his own. His *rishi* advisers remonstrated him but in vain. Finally they attacked him with *kusa* grass which turned into spears in their hands and they managed to kill him. As he was childless the *rishis* rubbed his thigh and created his successor, a dwarfish man 'like a charred log' with a flat black face representing the sinful and hoglike (*kola*) nature of Vena. The dwarf was made to sit down (*nishada*) and thus his descendants became known as Nishada and Kol people. According to Rig Veda the *rishis* of ancient Kanva clan to which Vena belonged were dark coloured. However unreliable and inverted history Hindu mythology may depict, it does bear out that non-Aryan tribes did exist in various parts of northern India and hierophants of some of them came to occupy honoured place among Vedic *rishis*.

Many *arch-rishis* and *prajapatis* unmistakably belonged to non-Aryan stock. Not only *rishis* as eminent as Bhrigu have been described by mythology as *purohitas* or family priests of *daityas*, a few have even been described as their progenitors. Kasyapa, a *prajapati* or a mind born son of Brahma, is father of Vivasvat Sun-god (the Vivahant of the Zoroastrian Avesta) and grand father of Manu Vaivasvata, the Hindu Noah, progenitor of the present Kali age. Kasyapa has also been described as the father of many races of non-Aryans through some of the thirteen daughters of Daksha he married. He has been described as the father of Asuras and Daityas (through Diti), of Danavas (through Danu), of Nagas (through Kadru) of Yakshas and Rakshasas (through Khasha), of Kalankanjans (through Kalka), of Pauloma (through Puloma), of Rudras (through Surabhi) and many others. Another *prajapati*, Pulastya through whom some of the



*Puranas* were communicated to mankind is one of the eight traditional founder-*rishis* of Brahmin dynastic lines. Pulastya did not produce true Brahmins. His offspring were the *Vanaras* (monkey people), *Kimnaras* (bird people) and *Yakshas* (the guardians of treasures). He is specifically named as ancestor of all the great rakshasas of Hindu mythology, Ravana, Kumbhakarna, Surpanakha, etc. and also of the flesh-eating ghouls known as *Pisitasana*. Another celebrated Vedic sage Vasishtha, who according to the Hindu tradition was a perfect orthodox Brahmin, had been accused in Rig Veda of worshipping false gods. He is the family priest of non-Aryans, of Sudasa, Sakas, Yavanas, and of the Ikshvakus of Ayodhya with *ikshu* the native sugar cane as their totem. Vasishtha's eldest son was born from low caste *chandali* woman. This son Saktri was father of another celebrated sage Parasara through a *pulliah* degraded caste woman. This *rishi* Parasara gave birth to another great rishi Vyasa author of *Mahabharata*, through illicit union with Satyavati who was a *Daseiyi* (of the tribe of Dasas) and Kalangani (black bodied) woman.

Mythological material available about gods unmistakably of purely Aryan origin—such as Varuna<sup>18</sup>—and of the areas

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18. Manmohan Ghosh after discussing in details "Varuna : His Identification" (Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol.XXXV No.4. December 1959) observes:

"Hence Varuna originally was a serpent god. The first stanza of the hymn which the Atharva Veda has in praise of Varuna, begins as follows :

The earth is his, to him belong the vast and boundless skies ;

Both seas within him rest

And yet in that small pool he lies.

In some of the medieval texts there is clear evidence that Varunapanchami mentioned therein is the same as Nagpanchami



regarded as the homeland of Aryans-such as Kurukshetra<sup>19</sup>. would show that there was dwelling together of tribes and clans of diverse racial origins even in north-west India during Vedic times. Similar diversity of races seems to have existed in the Indus Valley civilization also. Human remains found at Mohenjo Daro include skulls which have been identified

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which is to this day celebrated in many parts of India on the fifth day of Bhadon (Bhadrapada). This helps the proper understanding of the Atharva Veda hymn regarding Varuna..... The seer of Atharva Veda knew very well what he was saying and did not make any mistake in this regard. Only we need to realise the background of his inspiration. This hymn simply shows that the great god of the sea was symbolised by an aquatic being to his worshippers. The Hindus consider the cow as a symbol of the great mother goddess (Bhagwati). Their veneration of the monkey god Hanuman is well known. Hence it is not unlikely that in that remote Vedic age a particular aquatic being stood as a symbol of Varuna the lord of water."

The above is supported by Bhagavad Gita where Lord Krishna says "Of the aquatic beings I am Varuna (Varuno yadasumaham X.29)". Along with this it may be mentioned that Varuna has been called *Nagaraja* in Buddhist texts like the *Mahavyutpati* and the *Jatakas*. In a Nepalese legend recorded by Sylvain Levi, Varuna appears as a great *Naga*. From this it is clear that the seer of the Atharva Veda referred to a *Naga* symbolising Varuna when he said "yet in that small pool he lies".

19. According to Taittiriya Aranyaka (V. 1.1.) the places bounding the region of Kurukshetra were : Khandva (to the south), Turghna to the north), Parinah (to the west). This region has also been located in the Puranas between the Sarasvati and the Prasadvati rivers or between Tarantuka, Arantuka, Ramahrada and Macakruka. This area was also irrigated by other rivers such as Aruna, Assumati Indumati, Apaya, Kausika, Oghavati, Hiranyavati, etc. All these rivers or rivulets are in an area of scanty rainfall as is the case with this part of Haryana even today. No wonder archaeological evidence is becoming available of pre-Aryan settlements in this region.



as 'Aryan'. The presence of Mongoloid elements has also been noticed in these human remains. This would show that in the pre-Vedic period also several racial elements were present in these regions.

It is now an accepted tenet of philology that languages as we understand them today covering vast areas and spoken by people belonging to scores of clans and tribes did not exist in early period of human history when material equipment of society was extremely poor and each tribe or small group of tribes, separated by insurmountable natural barriers as they were, lived its own life and spoke its own language. Early tribal communities cut off by hostile

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Ramayana (II. 75.135) states that there was Varunitirtha at Kurukshetra. Mahabharata also mentions that Arantuka, Tarantuka and Macakruka were the *yaksa* gate keepers of Kurukshetra. A *yaksi* used to live near the Ramahrada at Kurukshetra (Aranyaka Parva). This *yaksi* is addressed as Paisachi in the same Parva. Mahabharata also mentions that Taksaka, the *nagaraja* formerly used to live in the Khandava forests but later on shifted to Kurukshetra and made his abode there. E.V. Hopkins (Epic Mythology) observes : "The connection with Nagas as treasure hidars appears in the description of gatekeepers of the *naga tirtha* at Kurukshetra" Some of the names of holy places in Kurukshetra are *Sarpadarvi*, *Nagahrada*, *Nagodbheda*, etc., which have been preserved till today. Another name of Kurukshetra is Samantapanchaka (Mahabharata Adi Parva) where Bhargava Rama made five tanks of blood after extirpating the Kshatriya race during the interval between the Treta and the Dvapara Yugas. According to another ancient legend Kurukshetra was the battle scene of the *Devasurasangrama* which resulted in the end of all gods and demons. Two demons named Sunda and Upasunda, began to live in Kurukshetra after subjugating every nook and corner of heaven.

c.f. Kurukshetra in later Sanskrit Literature—Indian Historical Quarterly March 1955 ; History and Archaeology of Kurukshetra—Indian Historical Quarterly, Dec. 1955.



elemental forces could not have a common colloquial language spoken by all the tribes living in an area even much smaller than northern India. It is, therefore, not possible that at any time in the pre-Vedic period there could be a Dravidian language spoken over northern India as a whole just as in the subsequent Vedic period a single Vedic language could not be the colloquial language of the whole area.

Even the language of tribes of the same racial group would not be the same in different areas. Languages at that stage of history were largely conditioned by the material and cultural level of existence of the tribe, by their means of subsistence, by their marital and social relations and by their entire environment. When a tribe became too big to subsist in a particular area and some of its members went out in search of new habitation, the language of these groups soon drifted apart as those who migrated adjusted themselves to the new physical and human environment. Where the material conditions got enriched at a greater pace the language also got enriched with greater rapidity and where these conditions suffered a set-back, the language also regressed.

The clans and tribes living in northern India in Vedic and earlier times had no doubt diverse forms of social organisation and were at various stages of hunting, pastoral or agricultural production. Their pattern of life could not have been the same even when they were in the same stage of economic life because techniques of hunting, agriculture etc., differed from area to area depending upon the environment and equipment available there and so did the languages of clans and tribes practising these modes of production.

The above linguistic diversity raises the question how the Vedic language arose, what was its nature and how did the languages of Aryan tribes emerge supreme? It is not true to say that the languages of most of the clans and tribes



who had been living in northern India before the coming of the Aryans had been vanquished during the Vedic period. It is also not correct to say that it was "the Vedic or Aryan period which witnessed the creation of the Indian man". The place names mentioned in Garuda Purana are 343 in number, many of which clearly show that such a synthesis of various tribal elements had not taken place during the Vedic period. Many of these tribes had yet to shift to places of their subsequent habitation. Dravida is mentioned in Garuda Purana as a country to the South West of Bharat, Mlechha as a country to the west of Bharat, Himachala as mountain populated by Mlechhas in the north of Bharat and Nishada as a country to the west of Bharat.

The type of thinking that has been done on this subject by Indian and foreign Indologists will be clear from a few examples. Commenting upon this Slater observes : "That the more brawny but thicker witted Aryans could learn the extraordinarily difficult language of the 'ill spoken man' as the Vedas term the Dravidian was not to be supposed. The Dravidians instead had to learn Sanskrit."<sup>20</sup> Marshal adds : "The low state of culture of the Aryans before their incursion into India might have contributed a great deal to their final acceptance of an easy amalgamation with the culture of the Dravidians. It has been suggested long ago that prior to their immigration into India, the Aryans of that era were probably of a similar stage of culture to the Todas."<sup>21</sup> Giving credit for this synthesis to brahmins, S. J. Gunasegaran states: "These priests in all probability were of Dravidian origin, who by virtue of their superior knowledge and alleged magical powers attributed to them by the Aryans in Rig Veda became *personae-gratae* among the Aryan ruling classes and particularly in the royal house holds.....The

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20. Slater : Dravidian Elements in Indian Culture.

21. Marshal : A Phrenologist among the Todas



*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* itself acknowledges that of the Aryan speakers who were white (*shukla*), brown or tawny (*kapila*) and dark or black (*syama*) the last were the cleverest of the three, knowing all the three Vedas, while others knew one or two."<sup>22</sup>

Agricultural societies were, no doubt, characterised by an extensive development of magic. In the long Vedic period Aryan pastoral communities transformed themselves, some wholly others partly, into agricultural communities. There was acquisition of slaves as well as of hierophants from non-Aryan communities. After Vedic Aryans entered India agricultural economy began to develop at some places side by side with pastoral economy and at others in its place, and with this the need for slaves went on increasing. Hobhouse and other have computed the percentage of slavery among modern primitive tribes and have concluded that the number of slaves increase as tribes advance from the first agricultural stage to the second and the third, in the third stage this number being three times as high as in the first agricultural stage.<sup>23</sup>

This, however, does not explain the evolution of the Rig

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22. S.J. Gunasegaran : *The Historicity of Athattiar—Tamil Culture*, Madras, Vol. III No. I January, 1958.

A factor which could have helped in the mixing up of dialects and the evolution of commonly understood language soaring above tribal speeches in a particular area was probably the fact of common totems amongst tribes. (c.f. George Thomson : *Studies in Ancient Greek Society*.)

23. L.T. Hobhouse, G.C. Wheeler, T. Ginsbrg : *Material Culture and Social Institutions of Simpler People*—London, 1930.

According to Hobhouse, etc., percentage for slavery among modern primitive tribes are : Lower Hunters 2, Higher Hunters 32,



Vedic language or the subsequent wiping out of the non-Aryan languages over most of northern India. No society however small can subsist without a language common to all its members. This would only imply that with slaves added to various tribal communities, the number of speakers of that tribal language increased correspondingly. This could not have by itself promoted the mixing up of tribal languages into a language common to most of the tribes. In areas where economy developed perceptibly, there was commingling of the neighbouring tribal languages which also took place when one tribe conquered the neighbouring tribe. This process of crossing was a prolonged one, the language of the victorious tribe providing the basic stem but at the same time getting somewhat modified by the absorption of the vigorous elements of the language of the vanquished tribes. The colloquial speeches thus evolved during the Vedic period were necessarily limited to small areas and does not explain the emergence of the Rig Vedic language.

The difficulty here arises because the simple fact that the Rig Vedic language was non-colloquial is ignored. The factors which help in the emergence of an artificial language are altogether different from those which promote the evolution of colloquial language spanning large areas. During the Rig Vedic period even agricultural economy had not fully sprouted and under such material conditions tribal languages could coalesce, if at all, on a local scale only.

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First Agricultural 32, Second Agricultural 46, Third Agricultural 78. In this connection Hobhouse, etc. remark : "Ignoring the pastoral peoples, for whom the numbers are too small to be of any value, we find that the practice of killing some or all of the vanquished predominates and is nearly constant till we reach the highest agricultural stage, where it drops by 50 per cent."



Referring to the Rig Vedic language, B.K. Ghosh observes: "Apart from the significant details which seem to challenge the claim of the Rig Vedic language to have been a homogeneous one, there are others which definitely prove that to some extent it was also artificial. Thus it can hardly be an accident that in Arti-Mandala (fifth) there is not a single infinite for *in-tu*; the Kanvas, the reputed authors of the first and the eighth Mandalas, seem to have intentionally avoided using the infinite for *in-tum* and *tavai*; the Vaisishthas, the authors of the seventh Mandala show a similar aversion to absolutes in *tva* and *tvaya*. Moreover perfect forms like *yamatur* (VI. 67.1) and *skambhathur* without reduplication must be regarded as purely artificial formations like the non-reduplicating second person dual perfect *takshatur* (X. 39.4) formed perhaps in imitation of the third person plural preterit *takshur* (II. 19.8) which in that case must have been mistaken for a perfect form as Wachernagel has suggested."<sup>24</sup>

Adolf Kaegi's description of the Rig Vedic languages is as follows :

"This language is an exceedingly ancient dialect, which differs in all grammatical points (accentuation, phonetics, word formation, declension, conjugation, syntax) and in its vocabulary from the later artificial Indian language, the Sanskrit of the law books, epics, dramas, etc. in a much greater degree than e.g. the language of Homer from the Attic...In a certain sense this dialect too is artistic or poetic speech developed in the guilds of singers."<sup>25</sup>

According to George Thomson the Homeric Greek

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24. B.K. Ghosh : Chapter on "Language and Literature" in the "Vedic Age", Edited by Dr. Majumdar—Vol. I of the "History and Culture of the People of India".

25. Adolf Keigi : Studies in Rig Vedic India.



"differs from all the dialects of Greece, spoken or literary. It is on the face of it a mixed dialect."<sup>26</sup>

The text tradition of Rig Veda was stabilized at a very much later date. However, the earlier as well this later language was artificial and differed from the languages of various tribes, spoken and of ritual. The language of ritual of various tribes differed from area to area and fully reflected the varying fortunes of the tribes whose colloquial speeches provided the basis for these artificial languages of Vedic *yajnas* and rituals.

It was very much later in the course of several centuries that a more or less common language of sacramental life of the tribal communities could emerge. In this the priestly class could have played an important role. Over and above the isolated and divided tribes stood the heterogeneous class of hierophants. Their magical lore which was mostly temporal at that time could not be without many common elements. However, the fact of bitter animosity among various *rishi* families during Vedic and post-Vedic period and their complete lack of cohesion till the brahmanic revival of the early centuries of Christian era would itself disprove that there was one single priestly language during Vedic period.

In the early Vedic period the evolution of a common artificial language soaring above colloquial speeches of various tribes could probably have come about through the efforts of Vratyas rather<sup>27</sup> than those of the Brahmins. Vratyas

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26. George Thomson : Studies in Ancient Greek Society.

27. The deification of the Vratya in more than one way, is clear from the Vratya hymns. These Atharvan hymns deifying a wandering Vratya priest with his strange paraphernalia have been found puzzling and confusing by some.

It has been pointed out by Chitrabhanu Sen (Vratyas and



were non conformist people mentioned in the Vedas as speaking an Aryan language. They have been mentioned as *daiva-praja*, favourites of gods, Marutas are believed to have given them chant and metre. Prof. K.C. Chattopadhyay thinks that Daiva-Vratyas are pre-Vedic Nordic (Aryan) conquerers of India. Jaimini Brahmana (II. 222) compares *Vratyadharma* with Brahmanadharma. Griffith states : "It seems that Vratya had attained an eminent position as an ascetic. He was required to be treated with reverence by the people. Wherever he visited he got due respect and there

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the Vedic Society—Journal of Oriental Institute, Baroda, Vol. 12, 1962-63) that Vratyas represented a social organisation different from the Vedic Aryan society and not merely racial and religious differences. He refers to the gentile organisation of the primitive communities into clan, phratry and tribe and compares the Greek terms *genons*, *phratia* and *phyle* with Vedic *gana*, *vrata* and *jana*. He mentions that the relation between the three units is not precisely known. These gentile organisations originated in the period of savagery and passed through the stages of barbarianism till these were replaced by civilization. During this long period some of the *vratyas* are likely to have retained the social organisation of earlier times.

Vratyas have been associated by some other scholars with the Magan priesthood. It has been discussed in a subsequent chapter that Magan referred to in the Mesopotamian cuneiform writings is now generally believed to be Makran coast of Baluchistan and the neighbouring areas of South Iran. In the Indus Valley Vratyas left a portion of their name in the term *vrati* designating large settlements in which they lived. Bhandarkar also thinks that they are responsible for many aspects of the Indus Valley religion including its proto-Siva cult. According to H. Raychaudhuri the Vratyas finally settled in Magadha and on their way along the foot hills of Himalayas they left their traces in the form of Lichchavis, Mallas, etc., whom Manu describes as the children of *Vratya* kings. Though Manu classes them as Brahmins who were expelled from their cast for neglecting the rites, *Mahabharata* classes them with poisoners, pimps, drug addicts, drunkards, mixed castes and half castes.



was no bar on his stay anywhere." Hauer thinks that Vratyas were definitely more prominent in their days than their counterpart. He further believes that Brahmanical record keepers have intentionally destroyed the original sources of the Vratyas.

Vratyas wandered from place to place in their carts, drawn by a horse or mule. Wearing black robes, a ceremonial turban, a shawl made of ram-skin and carrying a wooden lance, an unstrung bow (*jyahroda*) and a magical bowl, the Vratyas kept wandering most of the time in different tribal areas performing medicine and magic during the period when magic had ceased to be a supplement to the techniques of production but had not yet become esoteric possession of the priestly class. They were like the wandering minstrels of later times. They could have helped in the evolution of an artificial language soaring above the Vedic tribal speeches just as the *nathpanthi* and the *nirgun* saints of the first half of the second millennium A.D. helped in rise of the artificial language of *bhakti kavya* of early Hindi period. Later on this artificial language of Vratyas provided the stem around which the Vedic language took birth just as the language of the *bhakti* saints of the early Hindi period provided the basic structure for the Hindi language of today.<sup>28</sup>

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28. Another factor which could have helped in the mixing up of dialects and the evolution of a commonly understood non-colloquial language was probably the fact of common totems amongst tribes of diverse racial groups. George Thomson (Aeschylus and Athens) has referred to two Nordic (Aryan) tribes in ancient Greece which had snake as their totem. In India, too, snake could have been totem of Aryan, Dravidian, Munda and other tribes so also would be the case of cow, monkey and other totems. There is unmistakable evidence of the presence of 'Nagas' in pre-Vedic and Vedic Punjab, many of them could be Aryans with *Naga* totem. The *gavam-ayana* ritual sacrifice of the Vratyas means 'cow-way' which shows that many of them could be having cow as their totem just as monkey as



There is no doubt about the existence of tribes belonging to several linguistic families during the pre-Vedic and Vedic periods. The *Assuras*, *Daityas* *Danavas*, *Devas*, *Paishachas*, *Malechchhas*, etc., referred to in the Vedas and Puranas have now been recognised as human beings belonging to those tribal communities. The *patala* where some of them lived has been equated with Patalene (Hyderabad area in Sind) of the Greeks. Malechchhas is believed to have received its name from the Makran coast of Baluchistan, Paishachas must have been important people for they gave the name to an important Prakrit language—the Paishachi. Satpatha Brahmana calls the language of the Malechchhas as *Asura bhasa*. Commenting upon this D.P. Mishra remarks : "There is a tradition of the presence of Assuras in India... We have already referred to Asuri language. Panini the great grammarian spoke of the Asuri script."<sup>29</sup>

The very fact that many works of the Vedic period were available in scores of recensions, even long after their redaction, shows that a single speech, colloquial or non-colloquial extending over a major part of northern India could not have existed at that time.<sup>30</sup> The manner of evolution of mixed languages of the pre-Vedic and Vedic periods was no doubt different from that of later artificial language of

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well as pigeon was the totem of some other Vratyas. *Aisikapavas* were Vratyas as is clear from the Vratyastoma ritual in which Kusitaka (author of Kausitaki brahmana) acted as their *grhapati*. *Aisikapavas* means descendant of the divine monkey.

29. D. P. Mishra : Studies in the Proto-History of India.

30. Prof. Benfey has drawn attention in his edition of Sama Veda to the few Sama Veda verses which cannot be found in Rig Veda. As tradition regards Sama Veda to have been extracted from Rig Veda, this is taken by many scholars to prove that there must have been at one time other recensions of Rig Veda than we possess now.



the *Puranas* and the *Smritis* so also was the manner of their use and the methods of their spreading. This is not the subject of this Chapter. It, however, appears pertinent to mention here how Sanskrit and other Aryan languages could have wiped out non-Aryan languages as happened in the post-Vedic period.

It is not necessary to suppose a large scale influx of Aryan tribes into India in order to explain the emergence of Aryan languages as supreme in northern India. Just thirteen centuries ago, with the coming of Islam a small body of Arabs was able to Arabacize linguistically and racially the entire area of Middle East and North Africa in the matter of a few generations. By killing or driving into exile the male population of the areas they conquered and taking into harem the daughters and widows of the defeated people the Muslim Arabs set into motion large scale hybridization which multiplied the governing class many fold in the small period of a few decades. When mixing up of races takes place, the off-springs produced in the first generation are often biologically blessed with a stamina which neither of their parents possessed. The new generation not only had this "hybrid vigour" but also had the neophyte's feeling of being more Arab than the original conquerors.

When the Aryan expansion started in northern India, their attitude could not have been different from that of the children of Israel when they came to Canaan, as described by Joshua (xviii. 3-6) : "When you have passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan, then ye drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you....And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell therein; for I shall give you the land to possess it. And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families."

The pace of spread of Aryan language and race in North India could have been greater than that of Arabs after the



coming of Islam in North Africa and Middle East millenniums later. Probably at that time northern India had greater population than North Africa had in the seventh century A.D. The immense scale of hybridization is borne out by stories in Hindu mythology of kings whose harems were regular townships. One of them is reported to have such a surplus that he could supply each one of the 88,000 Brahmins in the capital with thirty slave girls each. Legions of our mythological heroes had wives in hundreds and Lord Krishna was not the only hero of Indian mythology having sixteen thousand wives. Hindu mythology itself bears witness to the fact that the expansion of Aryan languages in North India and the wiping out of non-Aryan languages was the result of extermination of non-Aryans, males in particular, over wide areas of northern India and consequent hybridization on a vast scale.



## PREHISTORIC ORIGINS OF BRAHMINISM

The period preceding Panini has been described as the twilight period of confusion and humiliation for Brahmins. This is far from true because the incrustation of innumerable priestly groups into a brahmin caste had not taken place by that time. The synthesis of the hierophants and priestly families of hundreds of old and new clans, tribes and racial elements into a single homogeneous rigid, hermetically sealed Brahmin caste was a much later phenomenon. At the time of Panini these distinct priestly communities not only existed separately from one another but many of them nursed old traditions of mutual hostility.

There is hardly any celebrated sage in Hindu mythology who did not have enemies among other sages. Many of them lived in constant hostility and confrontation with other *rishis*. Not only a consolidated Brahmin caste consisting of all hierophants had not come into existence by the time of Panini, but Sudras also did not occupy the degraded position they came to acquire later. Panini in one of his aphorisms states "sudranamaniravasitanam" (2.4.10) which means the *Sudras* who are not excluded. Panini's *gana-patha* (IV. 1.100) makes mention of a Nishada gotra. This does not occur in any of the standard gotra lists. R.S.Sharma expresses doubt about its being a brahmanical gotra. According to Kosambi<sup>1</sup>,

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1. D.D. Kosambi states : "The root word brahman, whether masculine or neuter, is peculiarly Indian. The original fire priest



the *Nishadsa gotra* would not be possible unless some brahmins had been adopted from the aboriginal priests or had served the aboriginals as priests.

Amongst the composers of Vedic hymns are a large number of Sudras and half castes such as Jama, Jagani, Kakshivat, Dirghatamas, Kavasha, Kanva, Sarisrikta, Mahidasa, Vamadeva. Trasadasyu, Stambanitra, etc. Chhandogya Upanishad states that Brahmin Raikva taught the Vedas to a sudra. The hostility of the early Aryans towards *dasas*, *dasyus*, *danavas*, *daityas*, *panis* and *assuras*, etc., had virtually disappeared before the time of Panini. In its place the conflict between the warrior and priestly sections of the Aryans—*kshatriyas* and the *brahmins* came to the fore, often resulting in bloody confrontation between them. If Hindu mythology can provide evidence for any historical

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was Atharvan, Iranian athravan. Other sacrificial priests such as the *hotr* also have their Iranian counterpart—all except the Brahmin who appeared rather late on the scene" (An Introduction to the Study of Indian History).

Benjamin Walker observes : "Brahmin is a term of convenience covering an amorphous category that embraces aboriginal shamans of Negrito and proto-Australoid descent, Dravidian hierophants who brought their spells from Babylonia, Magi thaumaturgists skilled in the sorcerous arts, and priests attached to the Aryan armies. Their identity in any case was soon lost, for these prelates, whatever their origin, were men of resource and vigour who did not believe that they were blackening their souls or jeopardizing their place in paradise by marrying indigenous maidens, or mating with forest nymphs of no caste....In spite of claim to the contrary, pre-Buddhist brahminism did not enjoy anything like the influence it acquired under the dispensation of the latter lawgivers. It was still a small and isolated growth. The rigid exclusiveness of the caste system does not appear to have existed in Buddhist times nor for many centuries after" (The Hindu World—An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism).



reality, it unmistakably shows that the hierophants who came with the Aryans when pitched against the Aryan warriors won over to their side the pre-Aryan and non-Aryan hierophants along with many of the tribes and clans to which they belonged.

The contradictory and confusing references to these hierophants in the Vedic literature may one day be illuminated by archaeology and become clear and coherent. For example so much of the Vedic priestly beliefs and almost all the spells, incantations, chants and charms in Atharva Veda are ascribed to Maga and similar priesthood. Sometimes, Angiras and other non-Aryan priestly families are associated with them. Indra is not only Purandara but also Angirastamah and Maghavan.

One of the earliest reference to the Magas or Magans is available in Sumerian cuneiform writings of the third dynasty of Ur in ancient Mesopotamia (c.2113-2006 B.C.). King Gudea of Legash 'a contemporary of Ur-Nammu' built many temples, pillars of which carry inscriptions. One of the inscriptions states : "From Elam came the Elamites, from Susa the Susians. Magan and Muluhha collected timber from their mountains...and Gudea brought them together in his own Girsu."<sup>2</sup> Later when Nebuchadrezzar rebuilt the temples of Babylon, an inscription on the temple of Marduk stated: "Silver, gold, costly precious stones, bronze, wood from Magan, everything that is expensive, glittering abundance, the product of the mountains, the treasures of the seas, large quantities (of goods), sumptuous gifts, I brought to the city of Babylon before him (Marduk)"<sup>3</sup>.

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2. Quoted by George Roux in 'Ancient Iraq' from M. Lambert's translation of Statue E. in *Revue d' Assyriologie*. Paris, XLVI (1952).
  3. Quoted by George Roux in 'Ancient Iraq' from L. Langdon's 'Die Neubabylonischen Koniginschriften', Leipzig 1912.



Maluhha referred to in the earlier inscription is generally thought to be the pre-Aryan Indus Valley civilization but there has been no agreement about Magan among the historians of ancient Middle East. Some thought it was Oman in Southern Arabia and others held that it was Makran coast of Baluchistan. However, the archaeological excavations at Anjira, Sotka Koh, Kulli, Nundara, Nal, Sutkagen Der and other places in Baluchistan during the last few decades indicate that this Magan-land is likely to be the Makran area of South Baluchistan which was called Gadoasia—the country of the dark folk—by ancient Greeks, and where an island of Dravidian language—Bruhi—persists till today,

Stuart Piggott points out that today Baluchistan consists of barren mountains, arid desert and sandy waste, repellent and inhospitable and that "the abundant evidence of ancient occupation in the Baluchi hills or the Indus plains implies less exacting climatic conditions than at present."<sup>4</sup> He states that the many large mounds of accumulated debris or 'tells' as they are locally called, could have "accumulated only from settled communities continuously inhabiting one site for centuries."<sup>5</sup>

At the time of Alexander weather conditions in Baluchistan approximated to those today and could not be different in the earlier millenniums.<sup>6</sup> It is not enough to explain the Indus Valley, Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations as river valley civilizations. It was the very fact of the valleys of the rivers and streams of Baluchistan—

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4. Stuart Piggott : Prehistoric India.
  5. Stuart Piggott : Prehistoric India.
  6. Strabo states (15-1.17-18) (Aristoboules said) they spend ten months on the voyage (down the Indus) without ever seeing rain, even when the Etesian winds were at their height. Rivers, however, were full and inundated the plains."



Dasht, Kaj, Nal, Mab, Makshai and others—being in a desert area of less than 10 inches annual rainfall which enabled these settlements to sprout there making them seats of *Urban* bronze age civilization along with the more or less contemporary civilizations of Mesopotamia and Indus Valley. Urban in the context of Bronze Age civilization generally mean the synoecism of villages to form a town or common marketing centre.

For the Bronze Age civilization Baluchistan was less fortunate than the Mesopotamian area because the twin rivers of Mesopotamia which carry forty times more water after spring rains than at the low mark, provide ready facilities for irrigation canals in both directions. However, it was probably more fortunately situated than the Indus Valley because an irrigation system could not then have been built on the Indus river.<sup>7</sup> While remains of a large number of pre-

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7. H.T. Lambrick ('Sind') has shown that irrigation in Indus Valley consisted in the exploitation of the Indus flood. Crop would be sown at the beginning of inundation and harvested at the end, i.e., autumn. This was less advantageous for the sowing of wheat than Mesopotamia where rainfall is just before spring, making it possible for wheat to be sown in mid-winter and reaped in spring.

Strabo (15-1.17-18) has described how cultivation was done in the Indus Valley in the absence of canals. He states : "Nearchos says that when they encamped near the Achesines (Chenab) they were obliged to shift quarters to the higher ground when the river rose above its former quarter's level, and this was forty cubics, of which twenty filled the channel up to the brim, and the other twenty inundated the plains. They concur also in stating that the cities built upon mounds became an island, as in Egypt and Ethiopia, and that the inundation ceases after the setting of Arcturus when the waters subside. They add that the land when still half dried is sown, and though scratched into furrows by any common labourer, it nevertheless brings what is planted to perfection and makes the fruits of good quality."



historic dams and irrigation networks, (some massive like the one in Makshai Valley and some ingenious like the one near Lakorian Pass) have been found in Baluchistan, there is no evidence yet, as Stuart Piggott himself admits, of any system of artificial irrigation in the Indus Valley. The solitary exception was Mohenjo Daro situated on a narrow strip of land between the main bed of Indus and the western Nara Loop, where some irrigation canals could possibly have existed.

The barren mountains and the sandy wastes of Baluchistan<sup>8</sup> were less forbidding to the society of the Bronze Age than forested valleys of bigger rivers in areas of greater rainfall. Striving to evolve an alternative to extinction amongst these hostile elemental forces, the early man in Baluchistan developed practical techniques and social organisation necessary for such a survival. The dams built by Bronze Age man in Baluchistan were unequalled elsewhere in that period in their massiveness and ingenuity.

Modern historians prefer to associate Maga or Magi only with Iran, regarding them Median in origin. They do not relate them to Magans of Mesopotamian cuneiform writings. There is no doubt that Magi priests occupied important positions under most of the ancient Iranian dynasties and when centre of Iranian civilization shifted from one area to the other the Magi priests too were to be found there, so much so that there was a college of Magi at Babylon when

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8. R.L. Raikes ('The Ancient Gabarbands of Baluchistan'—East and West, 15, 1965) has given details of large number of stone or earthen embankments—gabarbands—in Baluchistan by means of which water could be retained in surface drainage tanks. It is now believed that these gabarbands belong to the Neolithic-Chalcolithic period. As Baluchistan has much of its annual rain in late winter, the water stored in gabarbands could be utilized within a month or two for the spring crop before it was dried up by the summer heat.



Artaxorxes ruled there. Magis prepared 'haoma', the sacred drink, tended sacred fire, were custodians of the royal tombs, interpreted dreams and took part in the coronation of the new king. It is however also mentioned that "very little is known about their religion which was not that of the Persians" and that "they formed an isolated group and permitted the marriage of blood relations."<sup>9</sup> Magas were not only the great custodians of magic lore—that gave the word magic to Europe and maya to India—they also had the reputation of being the greatest builders of pre-historic world. Ramayana named architect Maya as the builder of Lanka and Mahabharata refers to the erection of mighty buildings with the help of *Assura* Maya. The vagaries and uncertainties of elemental forces in pre-historic Baluchistan would have necessitated the evolving of elaborate magic and totem. Only the type of irrigation works necessary in ancient *Baluchistan* could have made Magas such great architects and builders. It appears more probable that Magas originally belonged to Baluchistan and from there they spread to west and to east mainly after the destruction of their civilization the remains of which are now being discovered.<sup>10</sup> Only an inhospitable environment and forbidding material conditions like those obtaining in prehistoric Baluchistan could have produced an immensely rich mythopoeic view and a complex proto-philosophy similar to that we find in Vedic and Puranic literature. Historically Baluchistan is now recognised to be the most important part of this subcontinent and its valleys provided the home of the earliest Neolithic settlements so

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9. c.f. R. Ghirshman : 'Iran'.

10. John A. Wilson states : "It is legitimate to say that for nearly three thousand years until the founding of Alexandria ancient Egypt was a major civilization without a single major city" ('City Invisible'). If cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-daro have not so far been discovered in Baluchistan it should not mean



far known in this subcontinent and Iran. French archaeologist digging at Merchrag about 150 km south-east of Quetta have discovered vestiges of an ancient neolithic civilization as old as 7000 B.C. Archaeological work at other places in central and southern Baluchistan have given clear evidence of a great proliferation of settlements and development of material culture in the fifth and fourth millennium B.C. Unfortunately archaeological prospecting in Baluchistan has touched just the fringe of the problem, and there has not been proper Radio carbon dating or proper collation of the little work that has been done. The work done by the Pakistan department of Archaeology and Peshawar University's Archaeological Department in recent years has yet to be made available outside that country as the material published in their Journals is fragmentary.

Apart from the strongly theocratic character, highly developed bureaucratic machinery and well organized specialised groups of craftsmen which existed in Mohenjodaro and Harappa, it is believed that those cities had a considerable merchant class guarding hoarded wealth. The dominant class in a Bronze Age civilization was necessarily the priestly class. There were priest administrators among the Mesopotamians, there were priest builders in ancient

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that the ancient civilization there was less developed or inferior in nature. Fragmentary reports coming from Pakistan have reported the discovery of ancient cities in Baluchistan. A report emanating from Islamabad on May 14, 1978, referred to the discovery of remains of a 4,000 year old city in Lasbela district along the dead Porlai river. The city, according to the report, has fortress like structures with 9 feet thick walls and suggests that it had a fairly large population which knew copper mining.

Details of archaeological work in Baluchistan has from time to time appeared in 'Ancient Pakistan' published by Ferozesons, Peshawar and in 'Pakistan Archaeology' published by the Deptt. of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan.



Baluchistan and priest merchants in the Indus Valley, who performed the trading functions of which there is much archaeological evidence. If these priestly class of merchants were Panis as is believed on the basis of Rig Veda, some of them continued to perform the priestly functions after their urban settlements disappeared and they began to associate with Vedic society. As we would see later, there is a possibility that Panini was a scion of this class of Pani priests. Traces of Indus civilization have been found as far south as the Gujarat coast. It is evident that priestly class in Baluchistan was more authoritarian and centralised than in Indus Valley and probably the population there was also greater. A very large assemblage of slaves would be necessary to build the irrigation works the remains of which have been found in Baluchistan.

It seems that ancient Baluchistan not only provided the Aryan society some of its most dexterous priests but also most of its Dasas and Dasyus, who would have constituted a majority of the population in ancient Baluchistan. Historians now are generally of the view that when the Aryans entered India as conquerors, they encountered a population not only richer in culture but also very much larger in numbers. It is also believed that the priestly class was centralised and authoritarian in the cities of the Indus Valley. It will be more so in ancient Baluchistan where slavery necessarily existed on a vaster scale and where hydraulic regime could not be built in the Bronze Age without a highly centralised, authoritarian and oppressive ruling class. When eminent hierophants from among these conquered communities were taken over by the Aryan tribes, they would have retained as far as possible the organised character of this priestly class.

Refererring to this period E.B. Havell says : "It is probable that Aryans were always a minute fraction of the people of India and amongst those who call themselves



Aryans there were many of mixed blood."<sup>11</sup> The Aryan nomads were completely overwhelmed both in culture and numbers by the heterogeneous bronze age inhabitants of pre-Aryan India. Rig Veda laments "O Indra find out who is an Aryan and who is a Dasa and separate them." Not only the Bronze Age mythopoeic view and mythology subsisted all these millenniums but the Bronze Age dominance of priestly class unusually authoritarian and rigidly organized as it was, has survived till recent times with a few short periods of break. J.D. Bernal has pointed out that in China too "the barbarians that repeatedly moved in were all absorbed by the ancient Chinese culture" which has retained its "basically bronze age character, though profoundly changed by the iron age...right down to our times."<sup>12</sup>

How the Aryans were overwhelmed by the culture and pattern of life of the pre-Aryans is borne out by the rich and varied accumulation of Hindu mythology and religion and also by the well-known facts of every day life. "Speaking in the Indian way" say S.K.Chatterji, "one may say that over twelve annas in a rupee is of non-Aryan origin"<sup>13</sup> (in the pre-metric system of Indian currency one rupee was equal to sixteen annas). This "Indian way" the very contemporary practice of division into sixteen, not only of currency but also of weights and measures goes to Indus Valley and pre-historic Baluchistan.<sup>14</sup> This unit of sixteen seems to have been adopted by those pre-Aryan people from their lunar calendar. In Sanskrit literature moon is called *kalanidhi* as it is believed to have 16 *kalas* (digits). The

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11. E.B.Havell—The History of Aryan Rule in India.

12. J.D. Bernal—Science in History.

13. S.K. Chatterji—'Indo-Aryan and Hindi'.

14. Stuart Piggott states : "A very large number of weights, all belonging to a uniform system have been found in the two capital



weights and measures found in the two cities of Harappan civilization and also in Mehi in South Baluchistan and Sutkagen-dor in Makran on the Baluchistan coast belonging to an earlier period show that the practice of a rupee having sixteen annas, of a yard having sixteen girahs and a seer having sixteen *chhataks* has subsisted unchanged during the last six thousand years or so despite the endless upheavals the people of this country have gone through during this long period. Needless to say that scores of other beliefs and practices of the Indian people can be traced to the same source. It is significant that one of the earliest decorated vases found in this subcontinent, at Munidigak in the Baluchistan region contains the *peepal* motif, a tree held sacred in India to this day. Even the social memory of later times has preserved some recollection of the existence of the pre-Rig Vedic civilization. A Jatak tale—reincarnation story of Buddha—speaks of Indian merchants going to Babylon by sea.<sup>15</sup> This is presumably from the Makran coast because Rig Veda speaks of ships with as many as hundred oars being driven for three days<sup>16</sup> to reach their destination, from any other place in this subcontinent it would take much longer.

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cities of the Harappan civilization....at Mehi in South Baluchistan, and probably (from Mockler's description) at Sutkagen-dor in Makran....The weights have been found to run in a ratio of 1, 2, 8/3, 4, 16, 32, 64, 160, 200, 320, 640 and can be recognised as a system in which the unit was ratio 16 "(Pre-historic India)"

The earliest known silver coin is 32 *krsnala* (*krsnala* is from Assyrian *Kisal*, the red seed with black spot of *ceratonia*, the rati used even today by Indian goldsmiths). This is exactly of the same weight as the standard class 'D' coin found at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

15. Bavera Jataka.

16. Rig Veda 1.116. 4-5.



There can be no denying the fact that the Aryans completely got lost in the earlier population of India and were overwhelmed by the earlier inhabitants particularly those of the Indus Valley and ancient Baluchistan. Pargitar points out that "tradition ascribes the earliest Rig Vedic hymns to non-Aryan kings and *rishis*". Bhandarkar is not alone in maintaining that the Vedic hymns where the deities were given the appellation of Asura were composed by seers of the Asura stock. The number of such hymns is quite large. If we add to these hymns by *rishis* like Mahidasa born of Sudra or non-Aryan women, this would leave a very small number of Vedic hymns which can be ascribed to Aryan *rishis*.

Take the case of *Prajapatis* of Hindu mythology, the ten sages—*maharishis*—mind-born sons of Brahma, from whom mankind has descended. They are Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasistha, Daksha, Bhrigu and Narada. That Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha Vasistha, Daksha, Bhrigu and Narada were of non-Aryan origin has been discussed elsewhere in this book. Atri was a tribal priest of outcast races. Marichi is chief of the Maruts, who figure in the records of the Kassites and Matanni of the ancient Middle East as Marutash. According to Ramayana and Puranas Diti the mother of Maurts is also the mother of *Daityas*. Kratu another Prajapati is also of pre-Aryan origin. He belongs to the Valakhilya tribe. The destruction of a town of a similar name by Indra is mentioned in Rig Veda. According to the fanciful etymology of Puranas Valakhilyas were the children of Kratu born out of his pubic hair (*vala*) falling on a piece of arid land (*khilya*).

The only prajapati who is not likely to be of non-Aryan origin is Atri but he also married the daughter of Daksha a prajapati of non-Aryan descent.

The Vedas were followed by Brahmanas. Many of these theological manuals, written by and for Brahmins, are also



the work of non-Aryan hierophants. The oldest Brahmanas, the Rig Vedic Brahmanas, include the Aitareya Brahmana, whose author was Mahidasa, the son of a sudra mother. The eight Brahmanas of the Sama Veda include the Sama Vidhana Brahmana devoted entirely to magic, the Adbhuta Brahmana a manual treating of omens, auguries, marvels and miracles, and Vratya Stoma rituals by which non-Aryans were admitted into the Aryan brahminic fold.

Notwithstanding the picture which the Brahmanas give of the domination by the priestly sections of society and of their elaborate formulary to enforce it, there is no doubt that Kshatriyas had begun to emerge stronger during this period.<sup>17</sup> There are accounts of Vena Raja forbidding the priests to make sacrifices, of king Pururavas despoiling the brahmins of their ornaments, and king Nahusa forcing one thousand brahmins to draw his chariot.<sup>18</sup> Parasuram who according to the legend, cleared the earth of *kshatriyas* 'thrice seven times' suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of *kshatriya* Rama in the brief encounter at the *swayambara* of Sita. The whole Ramayana is biased against the brahmins and in a way also against the sudras. The fact that *kshatriyas* did not regard the sudras as their allies in the fight against the brahmins is indicated by the story in *Ramayana* that the virtuous Rama slew the sudra Sambuka for being over-zealous in his devotion.

Not only the leading position of power had been lost to the brahmins, knowledge also had ceased to be their monopoly. According to Chhandogya Upanishad when Gautama the rishi went to the King's place and wanted to

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17. Some of the Brahmins during the Vedic times were extremely poor is shown by the prayer of a brahmin to Agni beseeching the fire-god to accept his worm eaten wood as he does not even own an axe.

18. c.f. Bhupendra Nath Datta : "Studies in Indian Social Polity".



know answers to certain questions, the king replied that the teaching in question had never previously been known by the brahmins. Kasi king Ajatasatru pointed out errors in the sixteen propositions of the philosophy of Gargya Balaki, king Pravahansa instructed brahmins on the nature of *Akasa* and king Janaka gave instructions to the brahmins on the *Agnihotra*.

By the time of Buddha the brahmins had begun to be regarded as low born in comparison with kshatriyas. In Buddhist texts kings occupy higher seat than their brahmin advisers. In some Jataka tales not only are the kshatriyas regarded as a higher caste but even a degraded kshatriya is considered higher than a brahmin. In the *Ambatthasutta* (Digha Nikaya No.3). Buddha curbed the pride of a young brahmin Ambattha who had asserted that the other castes were to wait on the brahmins. Buddha reminded him that the Krishnayana clan to which he belonged was the offsprings of a kshatriya king from a slave woman. If an apparently illegitimate son of a kshatriya from a slave woman could become a brahmin, the priestly communities must have been a very mixed and heterogeneous lot before the time of Panini. No wonder that king Arindama could call *purohit's* son Sonaka, a man of low birth and that king Pasadeni of Kosala never allowed a brahmin to see his face, speaking to them through a curtain.<sup>19</sup>

With the increasing use of iron, it was no more necessary for urban communities to remain confined mainly to river valley in desert areas or to foothills of Himalayas where tribal republics had begun to sprout and grow since early iron age. With the increasing use of iron forests in some parts of the Gangetic valley could be cleared, as a result of which centre of gravity of civilization shifted to the eastern

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19. c.f. Bhupendra Nath Datta : 'Studies in Indian Social polity'.



regions of northern India and to minerally rich areas like Magadha. Strong princely states emerged in these areas which challenged even more vigorously the brahminic hierarchy. In this the newly rising kshatriya class had the support of the growing trading communities though not of the sudras.<sup>20</sup> The exploitation of sudras had to be intensified when the princely classes of the Gangetic plains became more ambitious and needed more surplus wealth for the maintenance of their increasing armies.

This period was marked everywhere in northern India by intense intellectual activity, and by great spiritual awakening. It witnessed a remarkable richness and vigour of ideas which was seldom surpassed by the centuries to come. This was a period noteworthy for wandering scholars—parivrajakas—seekers after truth who wandered from place to place for more than half the year, engaging in controversial discussion on matters of ethics, philosophy and nature lore. It was as much a quest of knowledge as the dissemination of one's own ethical beliefs. These wanderers included women and also students who were represented as begging like students in medieval Europe. There were halls put up for their accommodation and discussion. Pavilions had been constructed in groves adjoining settlements and there were rest houses—chhowtries—everywhere for them. This resulted in a great freedom of thought and a bewildering variety of doctrines.<sup>21</sup>

No wonder the brahmanical doctrine and the brahmins themselves lost their position. The brahmins, the repository

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20. There is an injunction in the Buddhist Vinaya texts against the admission of Nagas and some similar tribal elements to the Buddhist Order.

21. c.f. T.W. Rhys Davids : Buddhist India.



of the esoteric wisdom of those times, have been described by Prof. B.K Ghosh as "an arid desert of puerile speculations on religious ceremonies, marking the lowest ebb of Vedic culture."<sup>22</sup> Referring to the brahmanical literature of those times, Max Muller states that one could not read ten pages of the Brahmanas without revulsion and they "deserved to be studied as the physician studies the twaddle of idiots and the ravings of mad men."<sup>23</sup>

Divorced from the processes of production the brahminic thought became necessarily sterile. In the Bronze Age priests formed the administrative class, having definite and indeed essential functions. They prophesied the timing of sowing, arranged for the distribution of seeds and water, for storing of grain, and for collecting and apportioning herds and their produce. In the Indus Valley civilization they also guided and controlled trade and in ancient Baluchistan they were great builders of dams and irrigation works. The more man was at the vagaries of elemental forces, the greater was the need for magic and prophesy and the power of the priestly class. The more oppressive the system necessitated by material conditions, the greater was the organisation and centralisation of the priestly powers and more was the need for elaboration of mythopoeic view. In all this the priestly class performed a pivotal function. Even in the early Vedic society the priests performed an essential function in the Yajna which began as a collective mode of production. This had enabled the hierophants to acquire a dominant role in society.<sup>24</sup>

Under the new dispensation the priestly class merely

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22. R.C. Majumdar (Ed.) *The Vedic Age*, London, 1951.

23. Max Muller : *Chips from a German Workship*, London, 1931.

24. D.D Kosambi states : "It follows that brahminism must have



became the custodian of esoteric ritual and sacrificial formulary. This accounts for the term brahmin coming in greater use from this period onwards for various categories of priests. The term brahmin was originally applied to those priests of Atharva Veda who sitting on the northern side of the Yajna alter supervised the sacrificial ceremonies. The Atharva Veda contains a large substratum of indigenous doctrines both non-Vedic and contra-Vedic. Dr. Bhandarkar held that the Atharva Veda contained the magical lore of the Asuras and Tilak traced it to Magas and the Chaldeans. Coming to the fore of Atharva Veda priesthood indicated that the most orthodox class had acquired a dominant place among them. Atharva Veda is called Bhriguveda in Atharvan ritual text. It would be seen later that the brahmanical revival was planned and spearheaded by Bhrigu priests. Panini, Patanjali, Kautilya and Manu belonged to Bhrigu and allied priestly clans.

Panini's Ashtadhyayi marked a turning point in Indian history. By enforcing oral tradition with the help of sudra king Mahapadma Nanda, Panini not only tried to make knowledge and learning the close preserve of the priestly class but also helped in curbing urban life and trade for many centuries to come. Mahapadma Nanda who according to Puranas finally exterminated the kshatriyas has been

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had some peculiar function in the early means of production, some outstanding success which gave it grip upon society. Here superstition cannot arise, unless it has some deep productive roots, though it may survive by inertia. One of these functions was a good calendar...The word for rain *varsa* also means a year, so important is annual monsoon for India" (An Introduction to the Study of Indian History).

D.P. Mishra points out : "The Bhrigus...were skilled craftsmen. Besides being the discoverer of fire, they appear to have been expert blacksmiths, chariot builders and physicians" (Studies in the Proto-history of India).



described as the second Parasurama. Kautilya who helped another sudra king Chandra Gupta Maurya capture the Magadha throne prepared for his guidance Arthashastra, which has been condemned as ruthless, totalitarian and cynical. Vincent Smith refers to its "ferocious criminal code" and Iyer says : "The depravity of the standards of morality displayed in the maxims of the Arthashastra surpasses one's imagination."<sup>25</sup> That Kautilya belongs to Bhrigu or Atharvan priestly classes is clear from the fact that in Arthashastra he exalts Atharva Veda above the other three Vedas and his book is dedicated to Venus and Jupiter. He was a practitioner of medicine and astrology which have no place in the early Vedas and were the preserves of Maga and other non-Aryan priesthood.

Kautilya himself says that his Arthashastra is a compendium of almost all the ancient works on Artha,<sup>26</sup> amongst the earliest authors cited are Bahundantiputra, Usanas and Ambhiya. Manu Smriti, which gave divine sanction to the institution of caste and made brahmins supreme among castes, is also believed to be traditional ordinances of the *Manava* brahmins who were followers of the Black Yajur Veda<sup>27</sup> According to tradition its original text was dictated by Manu Svayambhuva of mythology to sage Bhrigu. The Arthashastra and Manu smriti thus represent the thinking and planning of scores of generations of non-Aryan brahminic ashrams and coteries. Highly

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25. P.S.S. Iyer : Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals.

26. Tradition describes Arthashastra as part of a fifth Veda, the Itihasa Veda, now lost. In the very beginning, Arthashastra states : "Having gathered together all the Arthashastras composed by former *Acharyas* for the purpose of gaining the whole world and maintaining it, this single Arthashastra has been composed."

27. K.V.R. Aiyangar : 'Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmriti'.



organised as these priestly communities were they did not take their humiliation lying down. However ruthless the statecraft and artifices of Arthashastra and the system of social slavery endorsed by Manu Smriti might be, these would have won temporary victory but for the oral tradition ordained by Panini through his Ashtadhyayi. When all intellectual life was confined to the brahmins and all knowledge interpreted in terms of religious dogma, science and progress were bound to be the first casualty. The post-Paninian attempt to combine philosophy with scripture was a task defying all reason and fatal to any clear understanding of nature. Faith and reason cannot be reconciled without allegorising the one and distorting the other, thereby obliterating all perspective of future and all sense of history.

Referring to this D.D. Kosambi observes : "The hide bound caste system became rigid only within the stagnant villages whose chief intellectual product, the brahmin was stamped with incurable rusticity elevated to religious dogma.....this mentality killed history; it mattered little which king ruled over the relatively changeless village...To the village priest myth gradually became more real than whatever happened to his neighbours of low caste with whom cultural and social intercourse was low....The Indian village appeared 'timeless' to foreign observers, simply because memory and record of time served no useful purpose."<sup>28</sup>

It was a static society that emerged when the brahminic revival encrusted the Indian society into a rigid caste system. It was, however, not a lifeless society, without protest or revolt. Religion was the form in which protest could best be expressed during those times and one unorthodox religious sect after the other continued to emerge to express the protest

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28. D.D. Kosambi : An Introduction to the Study of Indian History'.



of the slaves and even of the citizens in the face of a system which enforced mercilessly social slavery and exploitation. Heresy followed heresy and the work of suppressing it had to be done again and again. A large variety of hermits, sadhus, sanyasis, bairagis, etc., representing the religious aspect of protest against or flight from oppression added to the richness of the pattern. Some of these ascetics broke out of the social system and preferred to be total rebels like the *Kapalikas*, *Vammargis*, *Nath panthis*, etc., There were times in the medieval period when every fourth Indian was a *sadhu*, or *sanyasi* of one type or the other.

The doctrines of the ruling minority could not remain unaffected by the onslaught of some of them. Thus there was hardly a god of Hindu pantheon who remained unmodified and unchanged under the pressure of non-conformist religious movements of the common people. The ten avatars of the Vaisnava cult show how radically the common beliefs transformed Hindu religion in the early middle ages. Later the Krishna cult developed as synthesis of several heroes from many ages and many parts of India. Emerging as a banal pastoralism and a luxuriant eroticism, which too was a form of protest during those times, it grew in the cults of child god *Bal-gopala* and *Radhika* in the later half of the first millennium A.D. The common people used these as symbols of protest just as the child-Christ and Mary became in Europe the symbols of "the whole rebellion of man against fate ; the whole protest against divine laws, the whole contempt of man for inhuman laws as its outcome, the whole unutterable fury of human nature beating itself against the walls of its prison house."<sup>29</sup>

The bewildering kaleidoscopic pattern of Hinduisim thus resulted from a fierce class struggle which ceaselessly raged

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29. Henry Adams, quoted from 'Time, the Refreshing River' by Joseph Needham.



within Indian society despite the rigidity of the caste system. The greater the oppression, the more dynamic became the uprush of popular beliefs so much so the ruling minority was again and again compelled to compromise and to assimilate some of these beliefs. This continuous process of revolt and assimilation has imparted exceptional complexity to Hinduism. It also brought to end the Paninian oral tradition and the monopoly of education and knowledge that it gave to a particular caste.



## ORIGIN OF SANSKRIT LANGUAGE AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

Linguistics has been called the second oldest science, its tradition going back in India to the early part of the first millennium B.C. and in Alexandria to 500 years later. Yet the science of language was virtually unknown to modern Europe till the discovery of Sanskrit by Western scholars. Referring to this Professor Sayce observes : "What has been termed the discovery of Sanskrit by Western scholars put an end to all fanciful playing with words and created the science of language"<sup>1</sup> Prof. Sayce and others have pointed out that Max Muller and Whitney were not only Sanskrit scholars of great reputation but also were pioneers in the development of linguistics in the West. Max Muller's 'Lectures on the Science of Language' and Whitney's 'Language and the Study of Language' made valuable contribution to the origin and development of linguistics in the West.

"The Sanskrit grammarians were first to analyse word forms," says Macdonel, "to recognize the difference between roots and suffixes and on the whole to elaborate a grammatical system so accurate and complete as to be unparalleled in any other country."<sup>2</sup> Weber described Ashtadhyayi as the greatest grammatical work in any

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1. Prof. Sayce—Introduction to the Science of Language, Vol. I.
  2. A.A. Macdonel—History of Sanskrit Literature.



language.<sup>3</sup> Goldstucker added : "Panini's grammar is the centre of a vast and important branch of ancient literature. No work has struck deeper roots than his in the soil of the scientific development of India. It is the standard of accuracy in speech—the grammatical basis of Vaidika commentaries. It is appealed to by every scientific writer whenever he meets with a linguistic difficulty. Besides the inspired seers of the works which are the roots of Hindu belief, Panini is the only one among those authors of scientific works who may be looked upon as a real personage, who is a rishi in the proper sense of the word—an author supposed to have had the foundation of his work revealed to him by divinity."<sup>4</sup>

Since European Orientalists of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century wrote on Sanskrit Linguistics entire areas of India's historical and prehistorical past have been completely remapped, particularly during the last few decades. This has made it possible to evaluate anew the grammatical heritage of Sanskrit literature. This has become all the more necessary in view of the discoveries in the last few decades in the fields of social anthropology, structural linguistics and social psychology. It has now become possible to understand the real origins of Sanskrit grammar. Reference in Sanskrit literature to pre-Vedic grammatical elements can now be properly understood in the light of the intimate connection established between some grammatical categories and rituals. Social anthropology has shown that rituals are pre-lingual and many grammatical elements which have their roots in rituals are therefore extra-lingual in origin. Accordingly, these grammatical elements came into existence as soon as language sprouted as a flower on the social plant, long before the earliest strata of Rig Veda took its nebulous shape.

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3. Weber—History of Indian Literature.

4. Goldstucker—Panini : His Place in Sanskrit Literature.



Anthropologists have established that the languages of prehistoric primitive societies were not structurally incomplete or inferior to those languages which succeeded or superseded them. They have stressed that all human societies, primitive or civilized, speak languages of more or less equal complexity and that it is not correct to describe the vocabulary or grammatical elements in language evolved to express the distinctiveness of that society as poorer than that of others. According to Anthropologists the difference between a particular 'primitive' and a particular 'civilized' language is no greater than between any pair of 'primitive' or 'civilized' languages. This is contrary to the assumption underlying Indian Linguistics that Sanskrit was the language of the *shistas* and has survived because of its superiority over other languages in ancient India. Anthropologists have also begun to cast doubts on the existence of a proto Indo-European language as the original tongue of the common ancestors of the peoples in Asia and Europe speaking one 'Aryan' language or the other. Boars demonstrated on the basis of his study of several American Indian languages that traits common to them were more the result of secondary formations of areas of affinity than to a common origin. Troubertzkoy, the founder of structural linguistics, equally successfully applied this hypothesis to the data of Indo-European languages.<sup>5</sup>

In this Chapter we are concerned mainly with the prehistoric origins of Sanskrit grammar. Friedrich Engels, who observed a century ago that "life is the mode of existence of proteins", also remarked that man's ancestors started evolving language—and grammar—long before the appearance of the full-fledged man.<sup>6</sup> Social anthropologists have rather come to believe that the faculty of classification,

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5. Claude Levi-Strauss—Structural Anthropology, Chapter I.

6. Origin of Family : "The mastery over nature which begins with



of ordered arrangement of observed facts was acquired by man before he fully developed language. Therefore it can be said that grammatical categories come to exist in embryonic form in association with ritual at an early stage of human existence. Concretization of these grammatical ideas in the case of Sanskrit language would have taken place thousands of years before these were recorded in Sanskrit grammar. It is not, therefore, appropriate to regard these rules as the invention of these grammarians or to limit the study of Panini's grammatical formulations to the lemon-squeeze analysis contained in his *Ashtadhyayi*.

It has now been accepted by all serious historians of ancient Indian civilization that it has less than 50% Aryan elements and that Hinduism as it has been practised for the last two thousand years or so, is mainly a non-Aryan and pre-Aryan religion.<sup>7</sup> However, non-Aryan and pre-Aryan

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the development of hand, with labour, widens man's horizon at every new advance. He was continually discovering new, hitherto unknown properties of natural objects. On the other hand the development of labour necessarily helped to bring the members of the society closer together by multiplying cases of mutual support (and) joint activity...In short men in the making arrived at the point where they had something to say to one another.....First comes labour, and after it and then side by side with it articulate speech—these were the two essential stimuli under the influence of which the brain of the ape gradually changed into that of man.....The reaction on labour and speech of the development of the brain and its attendant senses, of the increasing clarity of consciousness, power of abstraction and judgment, gave an ever renewed impulse to the further development of both labour and speech....This further development has been strongly urged forward, on the one hand, and has been guided along more definite directions on the other, owing to a new element which came into play with the appearance of fully fledged man, viz., society."

7. Suniti Kumar Chatterji : "The Indian Synthesis and Racial and Cultural Inter-Mixture in India."—*Tamil Culture*, Madras, January 1958.



elements in Sanskrit language and grammar have yet to be fully appreciated. This should not have been difficult in the case of old Dravidian elements because Tamil, a language as old as Sanskrit, is still extant today.

Fortunately the work of Tamil grammarian Tholkappiar (4th century B.C.) held by many to be more or less a contemporary of Panini, is available today, though appropriate efforts have yet to be made to relate Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*, to Tholkappiar's '*Tholkappiam*'. Some elements similar to Panini can be traced to this ancient Tamil grammar, which also provides unmistakable evidence as to how the very character of the *Sanskrit* language, such as the acquisition of large number of nasal sounds came into being under the influence of Old *Dravidian*.<sup>8</sup>

The origin of Tamil grammar is traced by tradition to Agathiar, *Maharishi* Agastya of the earliest strata of Rig Veda, who was the wisest of the *Munis*. Hindu mythology narrates that when all the *rishis* assembled in the Himalayas, the earth began to sink under the weight of their wisdom. In order to redress this imbalance Agastya was beseeched to go South because he was the wisest and the heaviest of them all. Born together with Vasistha when the seeds of gods Varuna and Mitra fell on their sighting the beautiful nymph Urvashi, *Muni* Agastya is described by tradition as dwarfish, dark and an adept in sorcery and witchcraft which makes him a non-Aryan.

There is somewhat similar Attic tradition in ancient Greece of the birth of Erichthonios out of the seed of Hephaistos when it fell on the ground because Athena, the goddess of the city of Athens, did not allow him to ravish her. Commenting on this George Thomson remarks : "There

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8. c.f. S. Shankara Raju Naidu : "A Comparative Study of Tamil and Nagri Alphabets"—Tamil Culture, Madras, January-March 1961.



can be little doubt that what this means is that Athena was originally regarded as the mother of Erichthonios who was naturally fatherless, because his clan was matrilineal and that the intervention of Hephaistos is a derivative element introduced after the adoption of patrilineal descent had rendered the lack of paternity unintelligible."<sup>9</sup>

It is thus clear that Agastya's tale refers to a people still in matrilineal stage. There is evidence available from the archaeology of ancient Mesopotamia that the proto-Mediterranean people who are the dominant type among the Dravidian people of South India, were matrilineal when they came to India, prior to the Aryans.

While discussing the linguistic and tribal geography of northern India in Rig Vedic and pre-Vedic times, mention has been made of northern Dravidians who imparted Dravidian elements to Vedic language and to Vedic religion. The Vedic gods are each the product of a complex process of interaction of tribal cults during the long Vedic period and they kept undergoing changes as disparate structures of the tribal society merged in the broad strata of economic classes. It has also been discussed how gods like Varuna universally recognized to be purely Aryan acquired non-Aryan characteristics, as did Zeus, Indra's counterpart in ancient Greece. Many links in this study are unfortunately missing at present. For more than two decades Indian historians have been laying stress on ancient Mesopotamia providing key to many mysteries of India's prehistoric past but necessary efforts have yet to be made to initiate these studies. Unfortunately only a fraction of known archaeological sites have yet been prospected in Iraq and other Middle eastern countries as is the case in India itself.

On the basis of modest archaeological work so far done in India, it can be said that Indus valley was not the only

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9. George Thomson : Aeschylus and Athens.



area of habitation and early civilization in this sub-continent when Aryan clans, phratries and tribes entered India. A clearer picture of large number and variety of settlements in pre-Vedic and Vedic times in the various parts of India is now available. The Bronze Age man did not possess the where-withals to clear thick forests in river valleys of heavy rainfall or to fight the multitudes of animals inhabiting them. The Bronze Age civilization therefore, of necessity, sprouted in areas of less than ten inches annual rainfall such as Indus Valley, Baluchistan, Mesopotamia, Egypt, etc. However, there were in many parts of northern and southern India scattered areas where despite somewhat heavier rainfall material conditions existed for the Stone Age and Bronze Age man to build settlements. There is clear evidence available not only of these settlements but also of the exchange of goods and ideas between many of these settlements.<sup>10</sup> It is now possible to appreciate the contribution of these diverse tribes to the enrichment of the language and grammar of Sanskrit and later Indian languages.<sup>11</sup> Modern Bengali has been described as a Dravidian language spoken with Aryan words.<sup>12</sup> Maithili and Magahi, two modern languages of Bihar are believed to have been markedly influenced by the Austric (Kol) languages.<sup>13</sup> Even

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10. c.f. Bridget and Raymond Alichin : "The Birth of Indian Civilization."
  11. Thomas Burrow : "Sanskrit and Pre-Aryan Tribes and Languages". The Indo-Aryan Culture, New Delhi, April 1960.
  12. D.D. Kosambi : "An Introduction to the Study of Indian History."
  13. Suniti Kumar Chatterji : "In the evolution of at least two Modern Indo-Aryan sister speeches in Bihar, the Maithili and the Magahi, there has been a very likely influence of the Austric (Kol) languages, which evidently were suppressed by the Aryan Magahi Prakrit and Apabhhransa, in the peculiar device of pronoun incorporation in the verb, which is so foreign to nature of
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in modern Panjabi, the language of Panjab in India and Pakistan, ancient *Saptasandhu* of the Vedic Aryans, there are many words of everyday use which can only be explained with reference to Dravidian languages.<sup>14</sup>

The process of the assimilation of various tribal elements in the Sanskrit language and of the evolution of its grammar can be properly understood if studied in relation to ritual. The importance of ritual in the creation of Sanskrit grammatical elements can be realized from the fact that *karaka* described as the most original contribution of Panini to Sanskrit grammar has been found to be ritual in origin. Panini's aphorisms are referred to as *sutra*, a term also used for ritual instruction in some of the earlier Vedic literature.

Grammar is the result of a long process of abstraction and systematization performed by the human mind not in a few centuries but in the course of millenniums. Social anthropologists have come to believe that the faculty of classification, of ordered arrangement of observed facts was acquired by man before he fully acquired language and, therefore, grammatical ideas came to exist in embryonic form in association with ritual in the pre-lingual stage of human existence.

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both Aryan and Dravidian" (The Indian Synthesis and Racial and Cultural Inter-Mixture in India Tamil Culture, Madras, January 1958).

14. Apart from Dravidian words like *nagar* and *pur* for town or settlement current in most languages of northern India, the Dravidian word *kot* for a fortified settlement has currency mainly in Panjabi amongst northern Indian languages ; several towns in Panjab like Sialkot, Raikot, Faridkot, etc., have such names. Unfortunately little work has yet been done on this subject, but the presence of purely Dravidian words like *mandi* (market place), *kanji* (sour water in which rice, etc., has been fermented), *peti* (box), etc., in everyday use in Panjabi, shows that this study can be very meaningful.



Many sciences are now examining how the seed of language got planted in man in the pre-lingual period of his existence, how the organs of breathing, chewing and eating acquired additionally the functions of organs of speech and how the human brain became an instrument of directed change not only in itself but in the entire human frame, finally enabling man to break free from the great silence of matter. One of the first steps taken by man to separate himself from the animal world was the prohibition of incest and the evolution of marriage rules and kinship system. This was rendered possible by man's sex peculiarities—man is the only animal where opposite sexes copulate face to face, where sex is continuous and not a cyclic mating activity and where the female has orgasm, indicating in the language of Biology that sexual dimorphism is small in human species.

Referring to the importance of prohibition of incest in the evolution of society, Claude Levi-Strauss observes : "We know how incest prohibitions function in primitive societies. By casting sisters and daughters out of the consanguineal groups, so to speak, and by assigning them to husbands who belong to other groups, the prohibition of incest creates bonds of alliance between these biological groups, the first such bonds which we can call social. The incest prohibition is thus the basis of human society, in a sense it is the society."<sup>15</sup> To Claude Levi-Strauss goes the credit of "lifting up" kinship studies to the same level as communication theory.<sup>16</sup> He shows that kinship systems could be treated as a kind of language establishing a certain type of communication between individuals and groups, mediating factors in this case being women of the group who are circulated between clans and families in place of words.<sup>17</sup>

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15. Claude Levi-Strauss—The Scope of Anthropology.

16. Claude Levi-Strauss—Structural Anthropology.

17. Claude Levi-Strauss : "Without reducing society or culture to language, we can initiate this 'Copernican revolution' (as



Anthropologists have also shown that grammatical rules of a language generally correspond to the kinship rules. For example it has been pointed out that the Chinese kinship system derives directly from the simplest forms of general reciprocity—mother's brother's daughter's marriage—a type of marriage which ensures social cohesion in a simple way at the same time it permits this to be indefinitely extended so as to include any number of participants. This is a feature which is related to the total structure of the Chinese language. Comparing the marital system and grammatical rules of the Aryan and Dravidian languages, George Thomson has shown that the structure of the Dravidian and Aryan languages differ in the same manner and to the same extent as do the kinship rules.<sup>18</sup> Kroeber long ago pointed out that no kinship

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Haudricourt and Granai call it), which will consist of interpreting society as a whole in terms of a theory of communication. This endeavour is possible on three levels, since the rules of kinship and marriage serve to ensure the circulation of women between groups, just as economic rules serve to ensure the circulation of goods and services, and linguistic rules the circulation of messages. These three forms of communication are also forms of exchange which are obviously inter-related (because marriage relations are associated with economic presentations, and language comes into play at all levels). It is therefore legitimate to seek homologies between them and define the formal characteristics of each type considered independently and of the transformations which make the transition possible from one to another." (Structural Anthropology.)

18. In Appendix II of 'Aeschylus and Athens' George Thomson compares the classificatory system of the Indo-European languages with the classificatory system of the Dravidian languages of India on the basis of data collected and analysed by Morgan and Rivers and shows how the basic character of the language is influenced by the system of marital relations and social organisation. George Thomson has also shown that the classificatory system of languages could be most highly developed even in the case of very primitive tribes such as those in Australia today. He observes : "Of the Australian system there is



systems and languages are so completely different from each other as the Indo-European on the one hand and the Chinese on the other.<sup>19</sup>

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none more elaborate than the Arunta.....It is a marvel of complexity and coherence. These black fellows, not having cattle to keep or corn to measure, cannot count beyond five, but they carry the facts of kinship in their heads with a facility which makes the white men seem stupid."

19. How a substantial identity has been assumed to exist by anthropologists between language structure and kinship systems in the different regions of the world is shown by the following :—

*Indo-European*—We have very simple structure (marriage rules) but that the elements (social organisation) which must be arranged in this structure are numerous and complicated. Therefore it can be said that a characteristic feature of the Indo-European kinship structure lies in the feature that a problem set in simple terms always admits of many solutions. The Indo-European languages also have simple structures, utilizing numerous elements. The opposition between the simplicity of the structure and the multiplicity of elements is expressed in the fact that several elements compete to occupy the same position in the structure.

*Sino-Tibetan*—In the case of the Sino-Tibetan languages we have a very complicated structure (marriage rules), with two different sets of rules, and the elements (social organisation) are few. Translated into more general terms applicable to the language, it may be said that the structure is complex, while the elements are few, a feature that may be related to the tonal structure of these languages.

*African*—African kinship system is the extension of the bride-wealth system, coupled with a rather frequent prohibition on marriage with the wife's brother's kins, which makes the system of general reciprocity more complex. Correspondingly the African languages have several modalities corresponding in general to a position intermediate between the Indo-European and the Sino-Tibetan systems.

*American-Indian*—The originality of the American Indian



With the emergence of kinship system and social life, man began to develop a system of values—or to use a general term culture—and other semantic systems, totemism, ritual, myth, art, religion, music, etc. Side by side man improved his capacity to symbolize, to invent and to share symbols which became the basis of spoken language. The very techniques and the marked similarity of form which characterize prehistoric industries imply that even the earliest man had a semantic system whereby to teach them and to pass them on. It was through kinship systems ordaining associated life and ritual stimulating collective labour that man adapted his mind and body to new functions, acquired inventiveness and sense of future, invented and improved his rudimentary tools and became conscious of his differentiation with nature.

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kinship system lies in the Crow-Omaha type which consists in the simultaneous application of two simple formulas of reciprocity, both special and general which elsewhere in the world are considered incompatible. It thus becomes possible to achieve marriage within remote degrees by using simultaneously two simple formulas, each of which independently applied could have led only to different types of cross-cousin marriages. The linguistic pattern corresponding to this situation is that certain of the American-Indian languages offer a relatively high number of elements which succeed in becoming organised into relatively simple structures by the structures' assuming asymmetrical forms.

Commenting upon the above "highly tentative experiment" in which the anthropologists proceed from "what is known to him to what is unknown, namely from kinship structures to the linguistic structures", Claude Levi-Strauss remarks : "If the general characteristics of kinship systems of given geographical areas, which we have tried to bring into juxtaposition with equally general characteristics of linguistic structure of those areas, are recognised by linguistics as an approach to equivalences of their own observations, then it will be apparent....that we are much closer to understanding the fundamental characteristics of social life than we have been accustomed to think."



Before man could evolve language he had to develop the faculty of observing, analyzing and interpreting what he experienced in the material world and of logically ordering what he beheld around himself day by day, framing it into a conceptual scheme. No wonder that the logic in mythological thought has been held to be as rigorous as that in modern science. Magic as an attempt to distinguish man from his environment is used for "all important activities and enterprises in which man has not the issue firmly and safely in hand". This pre-science more than anything else made man conscious of the need of invention and articulation. Ritual helped man not only in collective endeavour and economic production but also in comprehending 'truth' as an organized product and systematization of associated man's struggle with nature. Unless man could comprehend this 'truth' as a result of his brain acquiring the faculty of processing and classifying information fed into it and of compiling it into a patterned structure, the need for expressing it in a flexible instrument such as language could not have been felt by him. This processing and classification of observed facts, i.e., of information fed into the mind of the primitive, is compared by many anthropologists with the working of a modern computer.<sup>20</sup> Levi Strauss assumes not only that the sounds of any spoken language are part of a system of binary opposition<sup>21</sup> but further that all systems of human

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20. Pioneering work on this has been done by Claude Levi-Strauss. Apart from his works, there are many efforts to assess his philosophy. One by Edmund Leach published in *Fontana Modern Masters* and another published in the *New Left Review*, London, No. 34 Nov.-Dec. 1965 are very good brief summaries.

21. Binary opposition is fundamental to most aspects of human culture. The entire phenomenal world is a balance between two opposing forces as cell and sex divisions are fundamental processes in Biology. In some cultures like that of India, this concept of balance between opposing forces is all pervasive. In



communication myth, music, art, ritual must share this characteristic of language<sup>22</sup> because it corresponds to an innate computer-like structure which is a universal attribute of all human minds every-where.

While describing the computer-like working of the mind of the early man, social anthropologists have discussed how the experience of the external world is categorised, systematised and stored away in primitive societies and transmitted from generation to generation, the necessity of which social man must have felt even before he was able to evolve linguistic categories. Science and language exist nascently in most of the animals and it would be more true of man in the prelingual stage. That was the stage when all experience became a ritual act and got crystallized into a totem. That is how the most primitive savages like some of the Australian aborigines or Kalahari Bushmen solve the problem of information storage and information retrieval. They possess so much wisdom about the local environment

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daily life in India we have the manifestation of opposition in purity and impurity enjoined by the caste society. The earliest and the most striking mythological complementaries were the Vedic brotherhood of *Devas*—gods, and *Asuras*—anti-gods. The *Asuras* are not demonic in the Christian sense of the word, they are antipodal, the polar opposition of gods, a complete reversal of everything which the gods represent. Some historians have employed the analogy of two sides of the same coin to formulate the Indian sense of interdependence between opposites in various aspects of Indian cultural life.

22. Claude Levi-Strauss : "We find in society other kinds of languages, whose analogy with language itself Haudicourt and Granai recognise. There are, for instance, art, myth, ritual, and religion, all of which I have considered at one time or another.....Myth is a language functioning on an especially high level where meaning succeeds practically at "taking off from the linguistic ground on which it keeps on rolling" (Structural Anthropology).



that they can live in considerable comfort in a terrain which a civilized man would regard as absolutely uninhabitable.<sup>23</sup> How intimately kinship is connected with information storage is clear from the relationship of kin and know, of gana and gyan (Sanskrit), of gens and gnosco (Latin), of genes and gignosko (Greek) and so on.

The major characteristic of the totemic system is that the kinship groups used these as they did verbal categories later to impose order upon the natural environment and human society. In the life of total collectivity of the early primitive societies, each human being had his own place in the social structure.<sup>24</sup> In the same manner each of the important natural species was allotted its place as belonging to a particular moiety or clan. The necessity of reducing the world to order by reflecting on it the system imposed by nature on society arose because experience, limited to food production as it was, had to be divided and allotted to various groups for storage and transmission, each primitive totemic group being responsible for maintaining and increasing the supply of one animal or plant and generally of that which gave its name to that group.<sup>25</sup> The greater was the need for

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23. B.Spencer and F.R.Gillen : Across Australia.

24. Radcliffe-Brown : "Just as each human being has his own place in the social structure, so each of the important natural species is allotted its place as belonging to a particular moiety, section or clan." Quoting this Goerge Thomson adds : "The world of nature is reduced to order by reflecting on it the system imposed by nature on society" (Aeschylus and Athens).

25. Spencer and Gillen state: "The fundamental idea common to all the tribes is that men of any totemic group are responsible for the maintenance of the supply of the animal or plant which gives the name to the group, and that the one object of increasing the number of totemic animals or plants is simply that of increasing the general food supply" (Across Australia). Spencer and Gillen have also observed that the totemic taboo is some-



increasing food production, the more was the number of totems.<sup>26</sup>

The peculiarities of the prehistoric totemic societies as of primitive societies today is that all species of living things recognised as existing in nature are treated like elements in a single system so much so the difference between a human group, clan, phratry or tribe or another is felt to be of the same kind as the difference between one animal species and another.<sup>27</sup> Anthropologists have shown that this is not an unintelligent or irrational way of thinking but simply an economic way of thinking. This is analogous to running several different programmes through a computer at the same time, all using the same computer language. If the programmes have been set up correctly, there will be no confusion. As the human brain can select, sort out and compare patterned structures and arrive at what Mauss has called *presentation totale*—viewing things as a total system—this would mean that a systematization trait, thinking in a grammatical manner became innate in man

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times directed primarily against eating the totemic species, and not against killing it, and in some tribes the distinction is clearly drawn.

Frazer has referred to instances of totemic settlements at breeding centres of the species.

26. According to Spencer and Gillen, the Australian totems include 31 species of mammals, 8 of fish, 24 of insects, 22 of plants, 53 of reptiles and 46 of birds. A large variety of totems exist in the extant primitive societies in the world today. In the struggle against elemental forces, whatever could be eaten became a totem. Grass seed was the totem of one Australian tribe because it was its staple diet. Opossum formerly the principle article of food of another tribe formed its totem. Wallabies and beetle grub were totems of other tribes.

27. c.f. Edmund Leach : Claude Levi-Strauss—New Left Review—34, London, November-December 1965.



and his brain had got wired, up, so to speak, with all the pre-requisites of language-making before he evolved concrete grammatical categories. Thus the faculty of logically ordering what man beheld in the material world and of framing it into a conceptual scheme enabled him to evolve language all of a piece and not merely as an inventory of words.<sup>28</sup> Such a language even in the rhythmical form did not emerge alone out of the collective economic life of the clan. Born together with music, dance, rite, mimic and magic, this fantastic world of poetic ritual could become a springboard for the instinctive energy of society because it was a language of social emotion and reflected the collective experience of the entire clan or tribe in the field of food production as circumscribed by the totem.

Levi-Strauss links so intimately the structure of the totemic order with the origin of language and culture and with the entire life of a people that a whole chapter in his 'La Pensee Sauvage' demonstrates how the structure of Indian caste system could logically have originated in a totemic system similar to that of the Australian aborigines.<sup>29</sup>

The animal names of Vedic sages and some sections of Vaidika literature can now be properly understood if we bear in mind the totemic origin of these names. Listing the totemic roots of a few of the hundreds of well known such names in Hinduisim, Benjamin Walker states<sup>30</sup> :

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28. Quoted by Edmund Leach in 'Claude Levi-Strauss' in New Left review, November-December 1965.

29. Goldenweiser has stated that the resemblances between totemic institutions in different parts of the world are the result not of common origin or of parallel development but of what he called "convergent evolution". The differences are primary, resemblances secondary ; the diversity is fundamental, the unity superficial. (quoted Georg Thomson).

30. Benjamin Walker : "Hindu World, An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism" Volume II ; under the heading "Names".



"From *aja* 'goat' came the name of Aja a tribe mentioned in Rig Veda; *asva* 'horse' is the root of such name as Asvapati and Asvatthaman and also of Svetasvatara 'white steed' the title of an Upanishad; *bharadvaja* 'skylark' is the totemic name of a celebrated *rishi* family; from *chhagala* 'goat' is derived Chhagaleya, the name of a Vedic teacher and also of an Upanishad now extinct in its Sanskrit form; from *gotama* 'bull' come the names of several well known sages and from *haya* 'horse' are derived the names Haihaya a tribe and Hayagriva a godling; *ibha* 'elephant' is the totem of the Ibhya, a village people mentioned in the Chhandogya Upanishad; from *kausika* 'owl' comes Kausitaki the name of Upanishad and from *kachchhapa* 'tortoise' comes the name of Kasyapa, a maharishi; *kshudraka* a variety of gadfly gives the name to a *gana*, a clan of ancient India; *kukkura* 'dog' were a tribe associated with the Vrishnis along the Yamuna; *malava*, a white flowering plant is said to give the name to the Malava tribe; from *manduka* 'frog' comes the title of Mandukya Upanishad; from *matanga* 'elephant' the name of a pre-Mauryan dynasty of Magadha; *matsya* 'fish' is the name of an important tribe in Hindu mythology and *mayura* 'peacock' the origin of the name of the Mauryan dynasty; from *mudgala* a kind of fish, is derived the name of a *rishi*; *mushika* 'rat' may be the origin of ancient Indian tribe known to the Greeks as Musicani; *naga* 'snake' is the name of an ancient people and is still used as a surname by Hindus of eastern India; *nakula* 'ichneumon' was the name of a Pandava prince; from *pipal* a kind of fig tree comes the name of Pippalada, the founder of a Vedic school; *riksha* 'bear' is the name of the *rishi* family to which Samvarana belonged; from *sakala* a species of snake comes the name of Sakalya, a teacher who founded a Rig Vedic sakha; from *sardula* 'tiger' comes Sarduliya, a rishi after whom a now lost Sama-Veda sakha was named; *sigru*, a plant, possibly the horse-radish gave the name to a people mentioned in the Rig-veda; *simha* 'lion' gives its name to Sinha and Singh; the



name Hathisingh (elephant-lion) is used by certain classes of Panjabi Hindus; from *sukti* 'oyster' comes the name Suktimati, capital of Chedi; *sunaka* 'dog' gives the name to Saunaka, a famous Vedic grammarian; a sage mentioned in the Chhandogya Upanishad who imparted secret knowledge to a student, was called Sunaka-Kapeya, 'dog-monkey'; *tittira* 'partridge' gives its name to the Taittiriya Upanishad ; and *vatsa* 'calf' to the vatsa tribe of the Ganges-Jamuna confluence with capital at Kausambi."

Society stood as an environment to primitive man in which ritual, magic, myth and language overlapped and blended completely as part of the primitive economy of their collective existence. The totem of the clan gave it concreteness. It was the function of the rhythmical arrangement of words chanted in unison to heighten the vividness of their collective existence and to harness it for economic production. Later with constant struggle with outer reality, man began to understand the distinction between self and environment. Only then he began to gather, apart from his collective experience, his experiences as an individual and a family member. As personal images began to develop together with social images, non-rhythmical language of individual communication arose side by side with the rhythmical languages of social emotion.

It was from the heightened language of group life, symbols arose which could be used for person to person interaction and to comprehend the mirror image of reality which became possible with the gradual extension of individual volition. Sound distinction, arrangement of words, the structure of syntax and grammar existed as much for the rhythmical language as for the later non-rhythmical language though these were more concrete in the latter case. The core of this structure necessarily arose all of a piece as a total conceptual scheme to make the patterning of sounds convey the meaning of the message. This would mean that the main



grammatical categories of the Sanskrit language arose, long before the earliest strata of Rig Veda, as part of ritual categories.

This is clear from the six *karakas* of Panini which are regarded by some as the most original ideas of the great grammarian. Panini's six *karaka* are *apadana*, *sampradana*, *karana*, *adhikarana*, *karman* and *kartr*, *hetu* being a type of *kartr*. There is correspondence between these *karakas* and ritual categories which have been pointed out by E. Herbert, M. Mauss and others. The sacrificer is the agent (*kartr*), the victim is the object (*karman*), the sacrifice areas and the propitious moment are the location (*adhikarana*), the oblation (*apadana*) and the bestowal (*sampradana*) corresponding to magic transfer itself. *Hetu* as the institutor of sacrifice is *yajmana*, the meaning of which shows that these categories are the heritage of very early past. Commenting on the word *yajmana* Chitrabhanu Sen writes :

"The word *yajmana* itself brings out the original character of all ritual. *Yajmana* is formed by adding *sanac* the affix for the present participle of the roots in *atmanepada* (middle) with the root *yaj*, to sacrifice....The verbs in *atmanepada* signify a special sense which has almost been totally discarded in the classical period. In contrast with the *parasmaipada* (active) verbs, the *atmanepada* verbs were used to signify that the benefit of the action performed accrues to the person who acts for himself...The verbs in *parasmaipada* are employed for the benefit of someone else....That was the original meaning of *yajmana* as a participle and an adjective, *yajmana* sacrificed for himself and consequently the priestly class was absent from the picture."<sup>31</sup>

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31. Chitrabhanu Sen : "Vratyas and Vedic Society"—Journal of Oriental Society, Baroda, Vol. 12, 1962-63.



The word *hotr* has a similar meaning. According to the Vedic Index,<sup>32</sup> "The word must be derived from *hu* 'to sacrifice' as is held by Aurnavabha. This indicates a time when the *hotr* is at once a sacrificer (the later *adhvaryu*) and singer. But the functions are already clearly divided in the Rig Veda, where the *hotr's* chief duty is the recitation of the *mantras*."

Structural linguists have asserted that the *karaka* system has an extra-linguistic starting point, some like R.Roche asserting that "it has nothing to do with grammar". Summing this up Sergiu Al-George observes : "We consider that the filiation between Indian grammatical science and the science of rite is a well established fact. This filiation should not be questioned upon, be it for the simple reason that Indian tradition itself considers grammar as an *anga* 'part' or 'auxiliary' of ritual science. There are moreover Liebhich's and Renon's works minutely demonstrating the ritual antecedents of various Indian grammatical terms. Renon's article *Les connexions entre le rituel et la grammar en Sanskrit* (J. Asiatique 1941-42) is perhaps one of the most fascinating piece of writing from the legacy of the departed French scholar. Dealing with the designation of cases by numerical indexes, as well as with *karaka*, the great Renon has no reserve in asserting that both belong to the ritual milieu...The theses upholding the ritual hence extra-lingual origin of Indian grammatical categories may look incompatible with linguistic accuracy in appearance only....Ritual categories are not alien to language, however, F. De Saussure, the father of Structuralism shows that the rite being a symbolic act, belongs to semantic system....L.Hjelmslev after him has pointed out the necessity of a larger conception of language including also structures other than those of sound-and-meaning, and that Philology

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32. Fateh Singh : "Vedic Index".



is only a branch of general science of sign system which would be the real theory of language in the structural sense of the word.....The appearance of Indian linguistics was thus possible because India as no other culture, had a ritual science which singled out the categories of symbolic thinking. The ritual origin of some linguistic categories is not a prejudice but a great advantage."<sup>33</sup>

The Brahmana literature is generally regarded as the basis of the Nirukta of Yaska. This by itself links grammar with ritual practices. Where ancient ritual practices did not form the basis of grammatical speculation, as in etymological formulations, there is confusion about them even in the Brahmanas. A few examples would suffice. The name of god Indra is derived in Satapatha Brahmana (XIV 6.11.2) from the root *indh* 'to kindle' while the Taittiriya Brahmana forms it from the word *indriya*. The word *ahuti* is derived by Aitareya Brahmana from *hve* 'to invoke' while Satapatha Brahmana derives it from *ahitaya* in an indirect (*paroksha*) way.<sup>34</sup>

An interesting work which shows how ancient ritual degenerated into pure magic is Samavidhana Brahmana the last two chapters of which deal with *kamya* rites in which *samans* are no more associated with ritual and are purely magical in nature. Commenting on this Burnell states : "That Rig Veda verses were used in a like manner, and that the Rig Veda had once a corresponding *brahmana* to the *samavidhana* is proved by the existence of Rigvidhana, a *parisista* which is merely a versified form of what must

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33. Sergiu Al-George : "The Extra Lingual Origin of Panini's Syntactic Categories"—Journal of the Oriental Institute, Vol. 18, 1968-69.

34. Viman Ch. Bhattacharya : "The Nirukta and the Aitareya Brahmana"—The Indian Historical Quarterly, June 1959.



have been a precisely similar work."<sup>35</sup> Referring to the magical elements in the Rig Veda, Shende observes that "the Rig Veda and the Atharva Veda once formed complements of each other for a long time and that was why Atharva Veda was not referred to separately in the Veda literature till the period of the Satapatha Brahmana."<sup>36</sup> The fact that ritual had degenerated into pure magic by the time of Rig Veda clearly shows that the basic grammatical categories of the Vedic language had evolved and got established before that time.

Having discussed how many Aryan elements are there in the Sanskrit language, it will be pertinent to consider whether there is any racial factor in the term 'Aryan' as is many times believed. Max Muller who first gave currency to the word Aryan in this philological and racial context later strongly decried the use of this term to connote a common race.<sup>37</sup> This has, however, persisted because it is difficult to maintain the concept of a common Indo-European language without that of a common race. It has been pointed out that the word Arya which means one who ploughs and tills<sup>38</sup> has no racial connotation,<sup>39</sup> that it merely indicates a

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35. Burnell : "The Smavidhanabrahmana" Vol. I, Introduction.

36. Shende : "The Religion and Philosophy of Atharvaveda."

37. Max Muller : "There is no Aryan race in blood : Aryan in scientific language is utterly inapplicable to race. It means language and nothing but language : and if we speak of Aryan race at all, we should know that it means no more than Aryan speech."

38. Max Muller "I can only state that the etymological significance of Aryan seems to be : One who ploughs or tills. The Aryans would seem to have chosen this name for themselves as opposed to the nomadic races."

39. Naniyadhab Chaudhri : "In view of the results of our investigation into the ethnic composition of the Indus people, there is no justification for characterising the Indus religion as non-



change-over from nomadic and pastoral to agricultural life and that the Vedic literature makes no reference to Aryans having a home outside India.<sup>40</sup> It has also been observed on the basis of a study of the basic roots of Tamil words that the Dravidians and the Aryans had a common origin.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, it is held that speech is so necessary to man and innate in a given society that if the present languages were to be forgotten, new languages very much similar to the previous ones would soon make their appearance.<sup>42</sup>

It is not possible to discuss the above questions here. These are pertinent only to the extent they go to show that

Aryan or pre-Aryan (The Indus Religion and Indus People—Calcutta Review, May to September 1952). "If the views given above are even partially accepted it will be found that there is no real gulf such as has been suggested, between the Indus period and the Rig Vedic period. There is an unbroken continuity in race as well as in culture," (The Rigvedic People—Calcutta Review, September 1953 to February 1954).

40. B.R. Ambedkar : "There occur two words in Rig Veda. One is Arya with a short 'a' अर्य and the other is Arya with a long 'a' आर्य. Arya with short 'a' is used at 88 places meaning (1) enemy (2) respectable person (3) name for India (4) owner Vaishya or citizen. Arya with long 'a' is used at 31 places. But in none of these the word is used in the racial sense. (Who are the Shudras).

P.T. Srinivasan points out that the word Arya occurs 33 times in the Mantras which in all contain 153,972 words and remarks : "This rare occurrence is itself a proof that the tribes that called themselves Aryas were not invaders that conquered the country and exterminated the people. For an invading tribe would boast of its achievements constantly (Life in Ancient India in the Age of the Mantras).

41. Nellur Swami S. Gnana Prakasar : Linguistic Evidence for the Common Origin of the Dravidians and Indo-Europeans—Tamil Culture, Quarterly, Madras—January 1953.

42. R.A. Wilson : The Birth of Language.



the Aryan tribes which kept coming into India for almost a millennium could not be speaking one common language as is generally supposed.<sup>43</sup>

A study of our languages in relation to early Sanskrit would have been useful if done scientifically, because the rudiments of modern languages existed in hoary antiquity. Founded on its distinct basic stock of words and grammatical system, a language kept improving and perfecting itself from epoch to epoch, side by side with the enrichment of the productive equipment of the society. It transformed itself imperceptibly by the slow and prolonged accumulation of new elements and the equally gradual dying away of old ones. Even the battles between languages, unlike the battles between the different people speaking them, took the form of a prolonged process of crossing, extending over several centuries, the victorious language maintaining its grammatical system and basic stock of words, but all the same, undergoing a change through the absorption of the vigorous elements of the defeated one.

Linguistic evolution is directly dependent upon historical circumstances. A proper study of our living languages, with the help of the dead ones, would enable us to understand the processes of our history whereby the colloquial speeches of scores of clans and tribes spread over Northern India coalesced into the present less than a dozen languages. The origin of modern Indian languages is, on the contrary, traced to one or two varieties of early Sanskrit which in the course of the time are supposed to have split into three or four

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43. How much variation can there be in these tribal languages is indicated by the fact that the three related tribes which landed in the Isle of Thanet (Britain)—Jutes, Hengist and Horsa—in the same year, 449 A.D., and from almost the same place spoke three different languages, so much so they were described by venerable Bede in "The Ecclesiastical History of the English Race" (730 A.D.) as different nations.—Cf. Simeon Potter : *Our Language*.



Prakrits. One of them, the Sauraseni Prakrit is believed to embrace an area now comprising Western Uttar Pradesh, East Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Bharat and Gujarat. Modern Hindi is held to have arisen along with other languages of these regions, from the splitting up of this Prakrit through its later Apabhramsa form. No reason is ever given for the linguistic evolution in India thus following a course altogether different from the one universally held good.

It is now the accepted tenet of philology that languages, as we understand them today, covering vast areas and spoken by people formerly belonging to scores of clans and tribes, did not exist during the early period of human history, when the material equipment of society was extremely poor. Further, the development of languages has taken place, not through the splitting up of bigger ones into smaller ones but, contrarily, through the coalescing of clan languages into tribal languages, of tribal languages into the languages of nationalities and of the languages of nationalities into the modern national languages.

Early tribal communities living cut off by hostile elemental forces against which there was as yet little defence, could not have had a common language spoken by all those tribes. Similarly, the great empires which spanned the face of the earth during the epoch of slavery did not have any language spoken by the entire mass of people living within that empire. Lacking a stable economic base of their own, these empires were militarily-held unstable conglomeration of tribes and clans living their own lives and speaking their own languages.

The case of Latin, sometimes described as the 'conquering tongue' of the Roman Empire, is often mentioned in support of the contention that Sanskrit occupied a similar position in India. Latin was, in fact, only a dialect, some two thousand years ago, of a little isolated district in middle Italy. the remains of at least two of its sister dialects, the



Oscan and the Ubrian were in existence till the begininig of twentieth century.<sup>44</sup> Wherever the Romans went they carried this language, so as to change the islands of life around them according to their own pattern. This artificial creation and recasting of city life was necessary because only through this could the imperial rule be accepted by one section of the conquered people and imposed on the rest. Latin thus grew into a non-colloquial language which the Roman Empire maintained as an official medium. After the end of the Empire, the ruling classes in the Middle Ages found it of great service. The Catholic Church adopted it as its official language, in this respect as in others, continuing the Imperial tradition. The feudal church found it apt enough that the eternal verities of an unchanging dogma should be primarily expounded and transmitted in an unchanging language. Though incomprehensible to the mass of the population, Latin persisted as the language of law, administration, scholarship and to some extent of the poetry of the ruling classes and later became the prerogative of the dominant feudal interests in the various countries of Europe. Ultimately the authority of Latin was challenged but this was not until the authority of the feudal classes itself was challenged.<sup>45</sup>

We shall see later that many artificial 'class-languages' or jargons came into existence differently in the different epochs of Indian history. All these, however, arose out of and as off-shoots of one or more tribal and clan languages. Not having a separate grammatical system or a basic stock of words of their own and lacking linguistic independence, these were, necessarily, doomed to stagnation and extinction, along with the privileged sections of society which created them.

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44. Cf. Whitney : Language and its Study.

45. Cf. Prof. W.R. Lockwood : "Langue and the Rise of Nations"—  
Science and Society, Vol. XVIII No.3, Summer 1954.



The question now arises whether Sanskrit was an artificial 'class-jargon' like Latin or a spoken language as has been claimed by most of the Indian and many European scholars of Sanskrit. Goldstucker, Keith and Leibich hold that even at the time of Panini (fourth century B.C., shortly after Buddha) when early Prakrits seem to have come into their own as literary languages, Sanskrit was a "spoken language used by the cultured classes."<sup>46</sup> Dr. Vasudev Saran Aggarwal has drawn the same conclusion from his study of Panini's *Astadhyayi*<sup>47</sup> and has described Sanskrit as the "standard speech of the *sistas*, i.e. Cultured persons, who even without instruction<sup>48</sup> were capable of using the correct speech." Dr. Prabhatchandra Chakravarti after a long discussion on the subject remarks : "Sanskrit has been a spoken language not only in the times of Yaska and Panini but we have sufficient evidence to believe that it continued to be so even at a much later period, we mean that of Katyayana and Patanjali...In the fertile period of its literary development it was undoubtedly a spoken language though its currency was possibly limited to the educated section of the upper class."<sup>49</sup>

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46. A.B. Keith : History of Sanskrit Literature.

47. Dr. Vasudev Saran Aggarwal : India as Known to Panini—University of Lucknow.

48. A Chinese pilgrim I-tsing, who visited India in the seventh century, A.D. described what a long process the learning of Sanskrit was. Children, he says, begin to learn the forty-nine letters and 10,000 compound letters at six. At eight they start learning grammar and at ten list of roots and the three appendices. At fifteen they begin to study commentaries on grammar and spend five years in learning it.

49. Prabhatchandra Chakravarti : The Linguistic Speculations of the Hindu—University of Calcutta.



The above contention that Sanskrit was the spoken language of the cultured classes is, however, not tenable. Brahmins and the educated members of the ruling class living in India before the Christian era could not possess a separate mother tongue of their own for such a colloquial speech of the cultured few only could not have existed at all. Language as a means of intercourse within a society, ceases to be a 'language' unless it is the common speech of the whole society equally serving all classes. No society can subsist without a language common to all its members. If the same people could have had separate language for the privileged and the unprivileged classes it would have resulted not only in the cessation of exploitation, on which rests the very existence of the former, but also in the breakdown of all productive activity, eventually leading to the paralysis of the entire economic life and the disappearance of all that held society together.

As there cannot be separate colloquial languages with their own vocabulary and grammatical systems, separately for the privileged and the unprivileged classes, Sanskrit can only be an artificial class-language created out of and based on the grammatical system and vocabulary of the single common language of the entire society of those times.<sup>50</sup> Because of the impossibility of a separate spoken language of the 'cultured class' independent of the spoken language of the common people, Sanskrit can merely be a 'jargon' which came into existence as an off-shoot of the common colloquial language of those times. The fact that the 'cultured class' always did its literary creations in its special class-

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50. J. Vendryes : "Special languages are the result of social divisions. In principle, therefore they are as natural as dialects, but they are always born of the very heart of a common language from which they usually continue to draw their sustenance."



language and held discussions, within itself, through its medium, does not establish that it was the actual mother-tongue of anyone of its members, or that the first words spoken by the children of the cultured class were in that language.

It is not necessary here to discuss the arguments on which the claim of Sanskrit as a spoken language has been based, such as the inclusion by Panini, in his purview, of linguistic forms relating to questions and answers, praise and censure, calling from a distance, greeting, terms of threat, mental deliberation, narration, friendly persuasion, haste, etc., and the narration of a story by Patanjali of a controversy in which a charioteer not only speaks in Sanskrit but ably discusses the derivation of the word *prajitr* with a grammarian. Apart from the fact that such terms are as necessary in a jargon as in a colloquial speech, it may be mentioned that the statements in the Sanskrit texts should not be accepted uncritically. In the Ramayana, the *vanar* chief Hanuman is said to have delivered his message to Sita in Sanskrit.

One contention, commonly put forward, which needs to be considered particularly, is that a huge system of grammar like that of Panini could not have practically come into existence, if Sanskrit had not been current as a spoken tongue at that time (fourth century B.C.)<sup>51</sup> Panini's system of grammar could not have, all at once, been distilled by him out of a colloquial Sanskrit. In fact a language guided by such rigid rules of grammar and phonetics could not have been a colloquial speech, nor could it be the mother-tongue of even the most learned of *pandits*.

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51. Cf. Prabhatchandra Chakravarti : Linguistic Speculations of the Hindus.



Grammar is the result of a process of abstraction performed by the human mind over a long period of time and is the achievement not of a single person but of scores of persons and generations. Panini himself refers to works of several grammarians who preceded him. This process of abstraction started soon after the cumulative creation of the society in the course of several centuries was collected and sifted into Rig Veda, where speech—*vak*—is a deity though it is stated to have been 'invented for the performance of sacrifice' (Rig Veda 4.11). Later this abstraction became all the more necessary and elaborated as the languages of the people drifted away from the language of the Vedas not only through the natural process of development but also by the absorption of several 'non-Aryan' elements. The analytical methods of Sanskrit grammar, the principles of derivations enunciated in Nirukta and the exhaustive list of roots were gradually perfected and made rigid. Seventeen writers of Nirukta are mentioned as having preceded Yaska, himself a predecessor of Panini. Slowly and slowly grammar became not merely the medium through which knowledge of scriptural language was acquired and preserved but a science by itself studied for its own sake, where the very fabric of language, *sabda*, *vak*, *nad*, etc., was deified and made an instrument of metaphysical speculations. This process went on till, by the time of Panini, it became, as has been pointed out by Colebrooke, "the endless pursuit of exceptions and limitations so disjoining the general precepts that the reader cannot keep in view their intended connections and mutual relations. He wanders in an intricate maze and the key of the labyrinth is continually slipping from his hands."

It will, therefore, be more appropriate to describe the Sanskrit language as a 'grammar', the appellation given by Dante to Latin and Greek. Dante in his *De Vulgari Eloquentia* raised for the first time in European history theoretical as well as practical problems associated with the language question. Dante maintained that Latin was a secondary, rather



artificial, language or 'grammar' which in the days of yore had been constituted out of the living vernaculars in order to bring regularity and permanence to the written word. Dante, similarly, refers to the Greek people having a 'Grammar' like the Latin possessed by the Romance people.<sup>52</sup>

A study of the origin of the word 'Sanskrit' would show how correct it is to describe this artificial language as a 'grammar'. In Sanskrit analysis of speech does not stop with the classification of speech but proceeds further to the analysis of these parts of speech into their ultimate elements, viz., stems and formative suffixes. This analysis called *sanskara* forms the fundamental principle of Sanskrit grammar and accounts for the popular designation of Sanskrit as applied to the sacred language of the ancient grammarians.<sup>53</sup> The name Sanskrit began to be applied to the language of the sacred texts only after the grammatical system based upon *sanskara* had been fully evolved.

The literary language of the Vedas was known as Chandas or Naigama as against the spoken languages described as Bhasa or Laukika. There is ample evidence both in Yaska's Nirukta and Panini's Astadhyayi to show that a distinction was made early between the literary language of the Vedas and the spoken language of the people. Patanjali referred to this well-marked distinction just in the beginning of his *sabdanusasana* and said elsewhere that Vedic words were stereotyped to be learnt from the Vedas only, while popular words are to be taken from the current speech.

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52. Cf. Prof. W.R. Lockwood "Language and the Rise of Nations"—Science and Society, Volume XVIII No. 3—Summer 1954.

53. Cf. Prabhatchandra Chakravarty : The Linguistic Speculations of the Hindus.



Chandas, as the language of the Rig Veda was called, seems to have come about as a result of the mixing up of some tribal languages of the early Aryans living in the north-west of India.<sup>54</sup> This would have happened over a long period of time with the language of a centrally situated or numerically or otherwise superior tribe providing the grammatical system and the basic vocabulary, the other languages enriching and modifying it. Such a common non-colloquial language would include words coined out of commonly understood roots or otherwise widely known over and above the distinctive words of the colloquial languages.

Referring to Homeric Greek, George Thomson remarks; "The language of the poems differs from all the dialects of Greece, spoken and literary. It is on the faces of it a mixed dialect—mainly Aeolic and Ionic, with a good deal of Arcado, Cyprian and a touch here and there of Attic."<sup>55</sup> Early Sanskrit must have similarly grown as a non-colloquial

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54. Reference to the mixing of tribes (and of languages) is available in the Vedas. In Rig Veda, the Bharata tribe under King Sudas is stated to have fought ten tribes including Purus. Both these names do not appear subsequently and their place is taken up by the Kurus. This tribe living in the areas near about the present Kurukshetra is believed by Dr. Dharendra Verma to have given Sanskrit its basic form (Cf. *Madhyadesh ki Sahityic Bhasha* in *Madhuker* April-August 1944). It however, seems that the Afghan Academy of History has collected much evidence from a comparative study of Sanskrit and Pashto about the Rig Vedic language having originated on the west of Indus, but the evidence furnished in *Aryana* published by the Government of Afghanistan is very scanty. Pashto, however, is the only language of the Indian sub-continent which counts figures as in Sanskrit. Unlike other Indian languages, its words for nineteen, twenty-nine, thirty-nine etc. are one-minus-twenty, one-minus thirty, one-minus-forty, etc. This is the practice in Sanskrit also.

55. George Thomson : *Studies in Ancient Greek Society*.



language of prayers and songs out of the colloquial speeches of the Vedic Aryans who "came in clans and their languages had dialectal differences from clan to clan."<sup>56</sup> Adolf Kaegi referring to the Rig Vedic language states : "This language is an exceedingly ancient dialect, which differs in all grammatical points (accentuation, phonetics, word-formation, declension, conjugation, syntax) and in its vocabulary, from the later artificial Indian language, the Sanskrit of the law books, epics, dramas etc. in a much greater degree than, e.g., the language of Homer from the Attic....In a certain sense this dialect too is artistic or poetic speech developed in the guilds of singers."<sup>57</sup>

Some of the Vedic hymns might have been written in the tribal languages<sup>58</sup>—Rig Vedic hymns indicate the names of the tribal *rishis* to whom these were revealed—and the language of these hymns later modified and altered when these were collected and arranged by Krishna Dwaipayana, traditionally described as the Arranger. This earliest tribal language also would generally be non-colloquial because unless it was more lilting and primeval in comparison with the common speech, it would not be able to attain in a high degree the qualities of rhythm, fantasy and magic so necessary for collective labour and for effecting changes in the external world by mimesis. Imposing illusion on reality was then the main function of poetry which had yet to emerge from magic.<sup>59</sup> Every member of the tribe was a poet

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56. S.K. Chatteraji : Indo-Aryan and Hindi.

57. Adolf Kaegi : Studies in Rig Vedic India.

58. The Bible was similarly written in several tribal languages. The word polyglot meaning of many languages is specially applied to the languages of the Bible. The name Bible itself is a plural diminutive of biblos (book) and means "the little books."

59. The magical power speech was believed to possess is indicated



and every tribal language had also to possess its jargon of poetry in order to raise it to a higher power. That artificiality of the language of poetry was, however, natural because poetry being the necessary vehicle of production was then organically connected with society. Later, when society was rent into classes, poetry emerged out of magic.

The more it ceased to express the aspirations of society, the more it cut itself away from society and thus gradually emerged the art of reciting poetry as a profession in itself. It is also possible that the work of evolving the artificial language of Rig Veda as well as that of codifying it was done by these professional reciters. The signs of class divisions in Aryan society are not wanting in the Rig Veda.

Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji has pointed out that Sanskrit "was not exactly the home language of any part of the country" and that "at first, out of the various Aryan dialects grew up a literary speech—a *kunstsprache* or language for artistic purpose—in which poets composed hymns about their gods which were collected and written down in the Vedas a little after 1000 B.C."<sup>60</sup>

After Vedic Sanskrit came the *sanhitas*—the word itself meaning 'close combination of letters'. This fixed combination of words in the *mantras* marked by a rigid and unrelaxable order, so common in the Sanskrit language, became necessary not only for the writing of hymns but

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by a hymn in Rig-Veda where Vak or speech says about itself :

"I am the Queen, gatherer of treasures, I am intelligent, the first of those, who deserve sacrifice : the gods have made me manifold, standing in many places, entering into many things....."

"I breathe like the wind, holding to all things : beyond the sky, beyond this earth, such a one am I by my power."

60. Dr. S.K. Chatterji : Indo-Aryan and Hindi.



also for preserving them through oral transmission. Later when the *brahmanas* were added to the *sanhitas*, the new prose form, drawing upon the vocabulary coined for the mantras, acquired some of its rigidity and immutability, making prose also artificial like the language of the hymns. By that time, this language, not yet called Sanskrit, had begun to be stereotyped by rules of grammar. These rules became increasingly strict, as the spoken languages of the various tribes now somewhat mixed, grew on and went forward. With the further perfecting of grammar and the development of the *nirukta* or etymological glossaries, the elaborate and verbose prose style of the *brahmanas* come to a close and there arose a still more artificial style known as *sutra*, characterized by extreme brevity and conciseness.

Sanskrit is thus divided into three periods—the Vedic ending with the Mahabharata (9th century B.C.), the Middle Sanskrit from *brahmanas* to Panini (fourth century B.C.), and thereafter Classical Sanskrit when this language is stated to have gone rapidly out of currency, giving way to early Magadhi and Pali, the Prakrits which came into their own under Asoka (third century B.C.) and Kaniska (beginning of the Christian era). The reign of Chandra Gupta II which was the high watermark of Sanskrit language and literature came much later.

It has been shown above that Sanskrit was from its very beginning a non-colloquial language though in its earliest stage it was the common property of all. After the emergence of classes it was modified into a class jargon. It became more and more stereotyped as the spread of iron and the growth of iron-age cities before the Mahabharata wars enriched the languages spoken by the people with particular rapidity. The artificial nature of Sanskrit became more marked when several elements of indigenous languages of India got absorbed into the colloquial Aryan speeches as a result of the mixing up of races after the Mahabharata war.



Stuart Piggott has stated that the Indian turban still common in North-West India "is surely derived from the Harappa culture."<sup>61</sup> Undoubtedly much of the cultural accumulation of the Harappa man has also survived till today. Important post-Vedic gods have been traced to the Indus civilization, so also the Aryan Swastika<sup>62</sup> and the very priest-ridden character of Indian society. Some have even traced the Brahmi and Devnagari scripts to Harappa.<sup>63</sup> A language, on the other hand, is amongst the hardest of human creations to die and almost impossible to be destroyed. There is no doubt that the Harappa speech must have greatly influenced the spoken languages of the Aryan people by the time of the Brahmanas (800 B.C.) where the use of turban is first mentioned.

Defining Prakrits as the unrefined or the natural speech of the people, some Indologists have described these as anterior to or contemporary of Vedic Sanskrit—the refined language. There is no doubt that Prakrits, the written records of which have come down to us are a later phenomenon. It has also been mentioned that the refined and the unrefined speeches after their early separation began to flow in two separate streams, spoken by two different strata of people seldom coming into contact with each other. This is incorrect because as has been shown above, throughout this period,

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61. Stuart Piggott : Prehistoric India.

62. Rev. Fr. Heras states in *India the Empire of the Swastika* : "Thousands of years before the Aryans invaded India, the inhabitants of Mohenjo Daro, belonging to the Dravidian race, used some small amulets with an inscribed Swastika. Besides the Swastika is also found in their inscriptions. No doubt remains at present about the origin of the Swastika. It is a Dravidian symbol which was adopted by the Aryans, as so many other institutions, when they entered India."

63. G.R. Hunter : The Script of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro.



the colloquial speeches of the society, still mainly tribal in nature, were common to all classes. The privileged classes, though they employed Sanskrit as their class jargon, none the less continued to share the common speech of the people, continuously drawing upon it and borrowing from it for the purposes of creating and sustaining their artificial class-language. This accounts for the presence of Tamil<sup>64</sup> and Prakrit<sup>65</sup> words in the Sanskrit language.

As the common languages of the tribes enriched themselves with the enrichment of the productive resources of society and as new words were coined and old ones given new meanings through the specialization of general terms and generalization of special terms, the privileged classes continued to draw upon these creations of the people, though the earlier grammatical forms and word-structures were generally retained. The borrowed words were often modified to make them conform to those forms and structures.<sup>66</sup> No doubt new words were also coined in the literary language to serve the need of poetic imagery and diction but it is not difficult to guess which of the several synonyms in Sanskrit were borrowed from the people and which artificially created.<sup>67</sup> For example for the word 'tree'

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64. Cf. Nellur Swami S. Gnana Prakasar : "Linguistic Evidence for the Common Origin of the Dravidians and Indo-Europeans"—Tamil Culture, January 1953.

65. Cf. Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya : "The Influence of Prakrit on Sanskrit"—Calcutta Review, April 1952.

66. Kumarila has frankly admitted that the Aryans used to pick up some words from foreign languages and changed them into Sanskrit with necessary alteration.

67. Vedic Sanskrit has more synonyms than Classical Sanskrit. The colloquial speeches of the Vedic tribes are in fact, likely to have more words with the same meanings than have come down to us through the Vedic Sanskrit. In early societies man used sev-



some of the Sanskrit equivalents are *vriksha* (originated from the idea of cutting), *taru* (idea of giving shelter), *sakhi* and *druma* (from the fact of its possessing branches), *anokaha* (from that of obstructing the passage of carts) and *padapa* (from drinking water through feet) ; the first two of these have come down to us almost unchanged in the modern Indian languages. The ruling class gave its own specialized meaning to the general terms used by the people. *Govesana* which meant search for a lost cow became an enquiry into a problem, *lakshana* meaning a sign became 'definition' and the meaning of *darshana* were changed from 'to see' to 'philosophy'. Quite often the two words having the same meaning in the spoken language such as *sukha* and *ananda* were given different meanings in the literary language equally often the same word was given different meanings on different occasions—*rasa* meant mercurery in medical science and poetic element in poetics. Gradually many of the colloquial words were discarded as new ones were coined through analogy and metaphor such as *balaka* for the rising sun and *kshetra* for body, as in Gita. Despite all the rigidity of grammatical forms which Sanskrit tended to acquire, some new grammatical elements continued to be borrowed from the colloquial speeches of the tribes. The Vedic *na* meaning both negation and similarity is likely to have dropped its second meaning first in the colloquial languages.<sup>68</sup>

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eral words for different aspects of or objects in nature he was completely dependent on. The Bedouin Arabs, who rely for survival on the camel, rarely used the general term but their language is rich in words describing each particular sort of camel. Farley Mowat states in *People of the Deer* (Michael Joseph, London) that in the language of Ihalmiut tribe of Eskimos "there are dozens of words which mean 'deer' in some specialised sense."

68. Some dialectal areas in the Punjab still retain *na* for similarity.



It will be seen from the above that Sanskrit was never the spoken language of the people and that it never acquired linguistic independence, even when, after the emergence of classes, it was departing more and more from the colloquial speeches. The best elements in the Sanskrit language, as also in Sanskrit literature, were the creation of the people though often modified by the privileged minority to serve its class interests. The origin of Modern Hindi or any other language of today should not, therefore, be traced to Sanskrit, Vedic or Classical. The modern Indian languages have no doubt descended from the tribal languages of Vedic times, but the Sanskrit language because of its artificial and class nature contains only a deformed picture of those colloquial speeches out of which it was born and alongside which it continued to exist.



## THE VEDIC METRE

Discussing Vedic metre, E. Vernon Arnold states : “The *Rig Veda* is not a book but a library and a literature. Our acquaintance with the poetry of many countries leads us quickly to the conclusion that its ten *Mandalas* or cycles have gathered up the work of many periods and that the original composition of the hymns was probably the work of several centuries. During the period in which this poetry was produced great political and social changes undoubtedly occurred, but of these there exists no record except such as is contained in the pages of *Rig Veda* itself or may be distantly inferred from the general history of mankind. It, therefore, becomes our task to study *Rig Veda* from within.”<sup>1</sup>

There is parallel development of language and metre in *Rig Veda* which can help in tracing the general chronological sequence of Vedic hymns. This is not easy in ritualistic literature where earlier forms could linger on for long time after they had been superseded. Their daily repetition could have continued even when they had ceased to subserve any social purpose. Almost all modern students of *Rig Veda* have noticed from a general survey of metre, language and subject matter of hymns and a study of the structure of verses that the traditional division of *Rig Veda* into ten mandalas is arbitrary.

The ten *mandalas* of *Rig Veda* are arranged according to tradition in three principal groups. In the first group are Rks. 1 to 50 of the first *mandala* and the eighth *mandala*

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1. E. Vernon Arnold : Vedic Metre.



which are a series of family collections and their arrangement is not quite regular. Second group extends from Rk.51 of the first *mandala* to the end of the seventh *mandala*, and unlike group No.1, it has *agni* hymns, invariably coming first. These are also termed family collections, as tradition ascribes each to a family of bards. The third group consists of ninth and tenth *mandalas*. The ninth *mandala* consists only of hymns addressed to *Soma Pavamana*. Many Indologists believe that this represents an attempt which failed, to arrange the hymns of *Rig Veda* according to the deity addressed. While Rks. 1 to 84 of the tenth *mandala* have hymns arranged in the ascending order of number of hymns, Rks. 85 to 191 of that *mandala* have hymns arranged in the descending order of number of stanzas in each. The arrangement in the three groups is regarded as mechanical and therefore of no value to philologists.

Several arrangements of *Rig Veda* have been suggested by modern writers. Firstly is the division of *Rig Veda* on the basis of linguistic evidence into "*Rig Veda Proper*" and "*Popular Rig Veda*". Referring to grammatical peculiarities of the portion included in the "*Rig Veda Proper*", E.Vernon Arnold states : "An examination of distinctive grammatical forms as a whole shows that the hymns of *Rig Veda Proper* record an earlier stage in the development of the Sanskrit language for they show that multiplicity of forms in the stem formation and flexion both of noun and verb which marks the earlier history of all Indo-European languages. The unthematic flexional forms of nouns and the extended use of perfect, aorist, subjective and infinitive systems in verbs are particularly conspicuous. On the other hand the language of the Popular hymns, though enriched by certain sounds hardly known to the *Rig Veda Proper*, shows a tendency to uniformity, obtained by the steady progress of certain favoured types in destroying or assimilating their rivals."<sup>2</sup>

## 2. E. Vernon Arnold : Vedic Metre.



There is clear-cut difference in metre and vocabulary of the *Rig Veda* Proper and Popular *Rig Veda*. While there is a large variety of metres in the *Rig Veda* Proper, the Popular *Rig Veda* is only in contaminated *Tristubh* and epic *Anustubh*. The *Anustubh* consists of four dimetre verses and *Tristubh* of four trimetre verses, each of eleven syllables. In the Popular *Rig Veda*, 'contamination' of *Tristubh* metre is by *jagati*, which consists of four trimetre verses of 12 syllables each. The variation of *Anustubh* stanza in the Popular *Rig Veda* is similar to that in the Atharva Veda.

There is some variation in vocabulary also between the *Rig Veda* Proper and Popular *Rig Veda*. The Popular *Rig Veda* contains a number of words of Indo-European origin which are seldom used in the *Rig Veda* Proper. This has made some Indologists hint at the possibility that the "heroic" and "popular" languages may have existed simultaneously for different purposes.

The *Rig Veda* Proper can also be divided in three clear-cut periods on the basis of metre, language and subject matter - the Bardic, Normal and Cretic periods. The hymns of the Bardic period have sometimes been sub-divided into Archaic and Strophic periods. The difference in the hymns of the Archaic and Strophic periods is marked not only in metre but also in the use of hiatus and the subject matter.

The ritual practices which are fundamental in *Rig Veda* are essentially older than any belief in gods, heroes, etc. Throughout *Rig Veda* the priests are skilled craftsmen, more important among them being those who were skilled in the kindling of fire or the preparation of soma. The ceremony of kindling of fire before day light could originally have been an act of sympathetic magic to ensure the return of day light. Similarly the preparation of the sacred drink was probably originally intended to be a means of raising the spirit of the clan in collective labour and in war. During the Bardic period itself both the sacred practices acquire



meanings out of harmony with each other. The sacred fire is now a 'messenger' between the people on earth and the gods in heaven. The sacred drink is also associated with gods, mainly Indra.

Discussing this classification of *Rig Veda* into 'Bardic' 'Normal' and 'Cretic' periods, E.V. Arnold states, "Our general conception of the subject matter of the earliest Vedic hymns is that it is composed of heterogeneous elements amongst which the following stand out prominently arranged in an order of time based upon their relative clearness in the minds of hymn writers (i) the primitive ceremonies of fire and drink making, (ii) the Indo-European nature worship, (iii) the Chaldean deities in the heaven, and (iv) the warrior gods of the invasion of India."<sup>3</sup>

In the later period of *Rig Veda* most of the gods of the earlier periods, Indra, Vayu, Mitra, Varuna, Aryaman, the Asvina and the Marutah undergo marked change, Indra is divested of his savage traits and becomes quite prominent among Visva-Deva to whom hymns are addressed. Vayu as the charioteer of Indra gives place in the later *Rig Veda* to Brahhaspati. In the later *Rig Veda* Mitra, Varuna and Aryaman are enlarged into a group of seven Adityah, the sons of mother Aditi. R. Oldenberg has interpreted this group as ultimately based on an older worship of sun, moon and the five planets.<sup>4</sup>

In the later part of *Rig Veda* Asvins are known as physicians and no more personify the first luminousness that heralds the dawn. They restore to youth the aged *Rishi Chyavana* and through the latter's intervention are admitted to the divine *Soma* ritual. The name Nasatya (negator of

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3. E. Vernon Arnold : Vedic Metre.

4. H. Oldenberg : Buddha, His Life, His Teachings, His Order.



untruth) of one of the twin Asvins has been deciphered in a Hittite inscription in Boghaz Koi in Asia Minor, while Marut appear in the records of Kassites and the Mitannis of the ancient Middle East as Marutash. The elder Asvin—horseman—is called Dasta—wonderous—and the similarity of this name with its Greek counterpart Dioscuri has often been noticed. There is no doubt that these are Indo-European deities of the period before Aryans entered India and gradually underwent change with the transformation and enrichment of the material basis of life.

The development of metre from the Bardic period onwards is equally interesting. The units of Vedic metre are the 'verses', the stanzas and the hymns. These also vary from one period of *Rig Veda* to the other. A verse consists most commonly either of eight syllables when we distinguish it as a dimetre verse or of eleven or twelve syllables both of which are called trimetre verse. This is not a rigid classification as many dimetre verses called heptasyllabic contain seven syllables only. Equally common are trimetre verses containing ten syllables, termed decasyllabic.

The typical forms of stanzas are *anustubh* (of four dimetre verses) the *tristubh* (of four trimetre verses each of eleven syllables), *jagati* (four trimetre verses each of twelve syllables), *pankti* (of five dimetre verses) and *dvipada viraj* (of two decasyllabic verses).

Where stanzas consist of combination of dimetre and trimetre verses, these metres are grouped as lyric metres, the most important of which are *usnih*, *kakubh*, *brhati* and *atyasti*. The least number of stanzas which constitute a hymn is three and the maximum is fifteen except in case of strophic and 'mixed' lyric hymns. Sometimes the last stanza of hymns contains one or two additional verses. There are also some composite hymns in which two or more hymns, generally of homogenous character are combined in a *sanhita* text. Here the number of stanzas in the hymn are quite large and



the metre also changes suddenly.

From their form and other characteristics, the metres have been grouped as belonging respectively to (a) lyric, (b) the *anustubh* and (c) the *tristubh-jagati* families. The lyric metre is practically unknown in the later portions of *Rig Veda* and is generally believed to belong to the earlier period.

In the *tristubh* verses found mostly in the later part of *Rig Veda* there is a caesura after four, five or six lines. Sometimes, there is a long second pause (i.e. caesura after fourth syllable) and sometimes there is a long first pause (i.e. caesura after fifth syllable). In case of *jagati* verses the second pause is always longer by one syllable.

The large variety of metrical forms characteristic of the Bardic period is missing in the later periods. *Anustubh* are found mainly in the last periods and *jagati* in the two intermediate periods. *Anustubh* verses in the Bardic period differ from those in the later period in as much as they have iambic reopening.

E. Vernon Arnold has given a table showing the homogeneous grouping of *Rig Veda* on the basis of distinctive metrical features which is given at the end of this chapter. This table shows the ten groups into which *Rig Veda* has been rearranged by modern scholars in place of the traditional division into ten *mandalas*. "Each of the ten groups in the new arrangement is based on one or more of the collections found in the *sanhita* text but being modified by the attachment and detachment of individual hymns, the ten groups arranged in a rough chronological order, in accordance with their general correspondence to the respective type of the Bardic, Normal, Cretic and Popular periods."<sup>5</sup>

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5. E. Vernon Arnold : Vedic Metre.



The hymns of the Bardic period consisting of the first five groups are generally termed as family collections, each being ascribed by tradition to a particular family of *rishis*. The composition of the hymns of this period seems to have extended over a long period of time and in each family to over several generations. The arrangement of the collection as a whole as well as within each collection is generally mechanical. The hymns become homogeneous through the use of family name of the authors in the separate hymns, through the use of special refrain verse and through the use of metres or rhythms peculiar to the collection. The metrical forms of all these collections are different from those which prevail in the later groups but are also almost peculiar to each family.

In the later five groups consisting of Normal, Cretic and Popular periods, there is a marked regularity both of the external and internal forms and there is almost exclusive use of two metres namely the *tristubh* and *gayatri*. Refrain verses are very rare in these collections, Kusika being, on the whole, the most prominent name as an author. This name appears to refer not to an individual but to an important Vedic school which spanned a long period of time.

Descendants of the Kusika rishi established the Kausitaka Vedic school to which is ascribed the composition of an Upanishad called Kausitaki after him. One of the descendants of Kusika, Kausamba undertook austerity to obtain a son as great as Indra. Indra was so much alarmed at this that he himself became incarnate as Kausamba's son Gadhi who afterwards became king of Kanyakubja. This shows that the later group of Rig Veda is ascribed to *kshatriya rishis*. King Gadhi's son Visvamitra is described as a *kshatriya* who waged a life long struggle against his *brahmin* rival Vasishtha. This is one of the earliest records we have of the struggle for supremacy between *brahmins* and *kshatriyas* in pre-historic period. The Mahabharata relate that the powers



acquired by Visvamitra through great austerities alarmed the gods so much that Indra sent a ravishingly beautiful *apsara* Menaka to tempt him. Clad in diaphanous veils she danced before Visvamitra and became the mother of the nymph Pramadvarya. The name Kusika is derived from *kausika* which means sexual love. From this and the myths associated with this family of *rishis*, it appears that different types of society and likewise different linguistic forms existed side by side during the long Vedic period. This shows that Groups VI to X of Rig Veda as rearranged by E.Vernon Arnold are not necessarily of a later period.

There is no doubt that subsequent recasting of the linguistic forms as well as myths was much more thorough in the case of tenth *mandala* and other hymns in the latter groups than in others. The statement in myths of Pururavas and Urvashi (R. V.—X. 95) that there is no truth in the friendship of women and they have the heart of hyenas and the way the myth of Yama and Yami (R. V.—X. 10) ends inconclusively shows that much liberty was taken with that material at least in those *sakhas*—schools—whose recension has survived. The story of Yama and Yami is a variation of Genesis story of Adam and Eve. It seems that the idea of ascetic abstinence regarding women as temptress (R. V.—X. 95; R.V.—I. 179) and faith in immortality associated with the worship of Soma (R. V.—IX.113) developed amongst different classes of hierophants. These beliefs were suitably modified when different groups of hierophants coalesced in the period preceding the consolidation of a unified brahmanic caste. The multiplicity of forms in the Rig Veda proper in comparison with popular Rig Veda has been mentioned by E.Vernon Arnold as a proof of their belonging to an earlier stage of development of the Vedic language. This can be due to lesser mutilation of these hymns than in the case of the hymns of Popular Rig Veda.

A large proportion of the hymns of Popular Rig Veda



are repeated in the first nineteen books of Atharva Veda. William Wright Whitney commenting upon this observes : "The two striking features of Atharva Veda as regards metrical forms are the extreme irregularity and the prominence of the *anustubh* stanzas. The stanzas in *gayatri* and *tristubh* are correspondingly rare, the Atharva Veda in this part presenting a sharp contrast to the Rig Veda...The corruption and alterations of Rig Veda verses occurring in the Atharva Veda are often such as to seem down right wanton in their metrical irregularity. The smallest infusion of care as to the metrical form of these verses would have sufficed to prevent their distortion to so inordinate a degree."<sup>6</sup>

The Atharva Veda belongs to one *sakha* while Rig Veda is an anthology of hymns of several *sakhas*. This would also show that the popular Rig Veda became part of Rig Veda at a later date and not that its composition was of a later period. Atharva Veda, the fourth Veda became part of *sruti* at a much later date. Its reputed author is *rishi* Atharvan of Maga ancestry and its rites of sorcerers are attributed to *rishi* Angora of pre-Aryan stock. Dr. Bhandarkar thinks that the Atharva veda contains the magical lore of the Asuras. According to tradition these hymns were said to have been collected by Sumantu a *rishi* of greater antiquity than Vyasa to whom he bequeathed the material. This would show that most of the core material of Popular Rig Veda as of Atharva Veda existed in some form before the coming of the Aryans into India.<sup>7</sup> This also explains the presence of certain words in Popular Rig Veda which have not been found in Rig Veda Proper.

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6. W.W.Whitney : Atharva Veda.

7. Tradition ascribes metres to Pingala who was believed to be the incarnation of a great serpent king. This makes it likely that many of the Vedic metres were also of pre-Aryan origin.



Much of this confusion will disappear if it can be understood that the refrains, so prominent aspect of the hymns of the Bardic period, are simply the incantations of mimetic magic. They are the primitive kernel out of which Vedic chorals had evolved. Similarly the single stanzas quoted in Atharva Veda from the various portions of Rig Veda are likely to be monostrophics consisting of the continuous repetition of a single system as incantation just as in ancient Greece monostrophics were used as victory odes.

The Vedic metres as well as the deities of the Vedic pantheon are all the product of a long and complex process involving the fusion of tribes into people, the subjugation of one people by another and the propagation and aggregation of an unknown variety of cultures. The deities took a new form when, with the development of tillage, the sky as the source of rain and earth as the receptacle of seeds assumed a new importance. Primitive rhymes which were magical utterances issuing spontaneously from a state of elation often induced by drink, took new forms owing to economic changes. When with the development of society the structure of the tribe disintegrated, the mimetic rites, with their abandoned gestures and ecstatic rhythm dissolved into a multiplicity of collateral activity out of which emerged poetry and music. In the circumstances it is very difficult to say which of the meters came first and which afterwards.

The function of metre, as of mythology with its ritual, was to adapt men's emotions to the necessities of social cooperation. With the emergence of classes, mythology began to be ossified into 'true' religion, which produced in the beginning a more elaborate world of phantasy. Having become divested from the function of achieving social cooperation the metres did not need as much of proliferation as was necessary in the earlier period. This was the period for the proliferation of mythology. This came to an end with the eclipse of undifferentiated tribal life, which was much later.



<i>Group</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Hymns</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Distinctive metrical features</i>
I	Bardic	i viii viii viii viii viii viii viii	127-139 12-18 19-22 23-26 27-31 42-46 95-101 102-103	Sobhari Vyas	Atyasti Dimetre Usnih Kukubh Satobhrhati Pragathas Usnih Mixed lyric metres Mixed lyric metres Mixed lyric metres Kukubh Satobhrhati Paragathas Anustubh with occasional extra verses
II	Bardic	v(part)		Sobhari Atri	
III	Bardic	x i vi	20-26 165-190	Vamada Mana	Anustubh varied Decasyllabic Tristubh
IV	Bardic	vii		Bharadvaja	Decasyllabic Tristubh
V	Bardic	i i	36-43 44-50	Vasistha Kanva Kanva	Iambic Tristubh Brhati Satobhrhati Pragathas Brhati Satobhrhati Pragathas



<i>Group</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Hymns</i>	<i>Included</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Distinctive metrical features</i>
		viii	1-5	Kanva	.....
		viii	6-11	Kanva	.....
		viii	32-34	Kanva	.....
		viii	49-57	Kanva	.....
VI	Normal	iv		Vamadeva	Brhati-Satobhrhati Pragathas
VII	Normal	i	1-11	Kusika	Regular Tristubh and Gayatri
		i	12-23		Gayatri
		i	24-29		Gayatri
		i	30		Gayatri
		iii		Kusika	Regular Tristubh and Gayatri
VIII	Cretic	i	94-115		Cretic Tristubh and Gayatri
IX	Cretic	i	31-35		Cretic Tristubh and Gayatri
		x	35-84		Cretic Tristubh and Gayatri
X	Popular	x	14-19		Contaminated Tristubh & Epic Anustubh
		x	85-191		Contaminated Tristubh & Epic Anustubh



## PANINI AND THE BACKGROUND OF INDIAN LINGUISTICS

Goldstucker, who has written a long dissertation in praise and defence of Panini, significantly remarks : "But we know too that Panini was a Brahmanic writer. No amount of scholarship would have assured him the position he holds if he had been a professor of Buddhistic creed. In forming then an opinion we must always bear in mind his leanings and his religious faith and the consequences which follow from these premises."<sup>1</sup>

Panini, no doubt, gives a very biased and one-sided picture of his times. India as depicted by Panini does not increase our knowledge of the period in which it was composed nor does it help us in understanding the real character of his work. Panini is generally held to be posterior to Buddha but there is no reference in Ashtadhyayi to Sakyamuni, Mahavira and other great thinkers or to the large number of philosophical and religious schools which proliferated in northern India in the period preceding Panini—the opening Sutta of Digha Nikaya mentions 62 different schools of philosophy and religious thought.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Goldstucker : Panini—His Place in Sanskrit Literature.
  2. Pali Text Society's edition, The opening sutta mentions these 62 schools of thought in a hostile summary. The next sutta describes Ajatasatru's review of eight major doctrines before finally accepting the doctrine of Buddha.



Panini's reference to Yajur Veda is limited to Black Yajur-veda and there is no reference to White Yajur-veda or to its compiler, the celebrated sage Yajnavalkya. Panini does not make any mention of Aindra school of grammar and scores of other systems of grammar are dismissed by him merely as those belonging to the eastern and northern schools. Panini does not notice the words Vedanta, Sankhya or Mimamsa and the two derivatives of the word yoga—yogya and yaugika—which occur in Panini have no indication of any philosophical meanings. Atharva Veda and the sacred literatures of Aranyakas and the Upanishads do not exist for Panini.<sup>3</sup>

Panini's Ashtadhyai<sup>4</sup> is regarded as a unique synthesis achieved by a great analytical mind. The language which was analysed by Panini had already in his own day acquired a peculiar sacred character. As the language of scriptures became more and more the language of esoteric ritual, closer became the parallel between the laws of language and laws of dispensation. This process must have been further helped by Panini's close friendship with the Nanda king. Mahapadma Nanda (? 364 B.C. to 331 B.C, ?) who ordained

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3. Vasudev Saran Agarwal—India as Known to Panini.

4. The Ashtadhyayi of Panini, as that term indicates, is a work in eight chapters. The general scheme of these chapters is as follows :

Chapter I : Sanjnas and Paribhasas; Anubandhas bearing no mutation of roots; ekasasa; active and middle verbal terminations; karaka; Gatis and Karmapravacaniyas;

Chapter II : Compounds ; Upapada ; Adesas of stems; Adesas of roots or heteroclitic conjunction; Luk with reference to comparative derivation, etc.

Chapter III : Derivative roots ; formation of tense stems;



that whosoever learnt Panini's Ashtadhyayi should be rewarded with a thousand pieces of gold.<sup>5</sup> He must also have helped in suppressing most of the non-Paninian schools of grammar and all the non-conformist schools of thought when he exterminated the kshatriyas. Puranas lament that the kings of the earth after Mahapadma Nanda would henceforth be sudras since there would be no kshatriyas left

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Kris; Conjugational vibhaktis.

Chapter IV, : Stripratyayas; Taddhitas; Samasanta-  
& V pratyayas.

Chapter VI : Articulative—phonological morphological  
and VII & processes ; word-accent and compound  
VIII : accent; processes in Purvapada; vocative  
changes; etc.

The eight chapters of Ashtadhyayi are divided into four Padas each. The number of sutras in each Pada according to Kasikavrtti is as follows :

Chapter	I :	75	73	93	110
Chapter	II :	72	38	73	85
Chapter	III :	150	188	176	117
Chapter	IV :	178	145	168	144
Chapter	V :	136	140	119	160
Chapter	VI :	223	199	139	175
Chapter	VII :	103	118	120	97
Chapter	VIII :	74	108	119	68
Total	: 3983				

5. Mentioned by Hsuan Tsang, in his account of Panini's Ashtadhyayi.



when this 'second Parasurama' had completed his task.<sup>6</sup>

There is a possibility that Panini was a descendant of Panis, a non-Aryan tribe referred to in Rig Veda. This obvious aspect of Panini's name has been missed by scholars. Panini himself in a sutra of Ashtadhyayi mentioned the word Panini as a scion of the Panis. In this sense of descendant or scion, the suffix 'ni' is used till today by many castes of Sindhis and West Panjabis. We are familiar with names like Mirchandani, Jotwani, Bhutani, Advani, etc.

According to Bhodhayan Shrot Sutra, Panini was the name of avantar gotra of Vatsya Bhrigus. Who were the Bhrigus and what association they had with Panis? According to a legend Bhrigus or Bharagavas are the purohits or family priests of Daityas and Danavas. They are associated with Angiras. In Rig Veda (VI.33.2) Indra is said to have destroyed the Panis together with the Angiras. In the same Mandala there is reference to hostility between Panis and the Angiras. It is stated that the Panis fled before Kutsa of the family of Angiras. Virupa rishi of the same family asks : "Which Panis shall we fight with the help of Agni for cows? (VIII.75.7). Indra is described as Angirastamah (the chief of the Angiras) in Rig Veda (I.100.4) and it is stated that inspired by the hymns of Angiras he overcame the Panis by his war (VI.39.3). Panis were merchants and usurers (VIII.66.10) and Bharadwaja is loud in his praise of the gifts he received from Brbu, Pani chief. Panis were non-sacrificing but Sarama's mission to Pani might mean that an attempt was made to bring them to the fold of Indra worship. It is also stated in Rig Veda (VII.19.19) that by offering oblation to Indra, rishi Vasistha was bestowing wealth even on the Panis.

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6. Quoted by Dr.Bhupindra Nath Datta in Studies in Indian Social Polity.



The interpretation that rishi Vasistha was partially inclined to this Dasyu tribe is supported by other Riks. (VIII.104. 14-15-16) in which Vasistha himself confesses that he was accused of worshipping false gods and of being a Yatudhana i.e. a demon.

A few facts stand out in this welter of contractory observations in Rig Veda. First, Pani was the only Dasyu tribe mentioned by name in the Rig Veda and that Panis were merchants. Secondly, Indra who was once against both the Panis and the Angiras (Rik VI.33.2) became less hostile to Panis and intimately connected with Angiras. The entire ninth Mandala of Rig Veda is by Angira rishis and glorification of Angiras reaches its climax in the hymns in the tenth Mandala by Nabhanedist and Abasya rishis of the same family. By the tenth Mandala Panis seem to have become the special enemies of the Angiras. The most repeated of the myths is the part played by the Angiras in the rescue and recovery of cows concealed by the Panis.

Thirdly there is a group of Atharvans or Angiras *rishis* who are favourably inclined towards Panis. There are also many references to Panis by Bharadwaja *rishis* who composed the sixth *Mandala* of Rig Veda and some of these references are very significant. It is said that "Soma born together with friendly Indra forcibly introduced to hymn the Panis who stole cows." This probably means that Panis routed in battle were forced to worship Soma and Indra. Fourthly the Panis even though described as Dasyus had their king during the Rig Vedic period. In the fifth mandala there is mentioned a list of gift givers which includes the name of Brbu, a king of the Panis who is highly praised for his liberality to the rishis. The sixth *Mandala* mentions the high banks of Ganges in connection with Panis and Brbu. This probably indicates that the Panis had a settlement on Ganges (VI.18.31-32-33). In the first Mandala (I. 36.16)



there is reference to Panis who are called Dasyus being removed to a far off land.

From the varying fortune of the Panis from one Mandala of Rig Veda to the other, one is left in no doubt that the Panis constituted a part, and not an insignificant part of Rig Vedic society. That some Panis or traders could have become part of the Bhrigu clan is also indicated by a legend that in the quarrel between Siva and Daksha, Bhrigu sided with Daksha. Bhrigu later on married Khyati, a daughter of Daksha and the couple became parents of Lakshmi, goddess of fortune and wealth. How the fortune of Panis has been somewhat different from other Dasas or Dasyus is indicated by the meanings these words acquired in later Sanskrit. While Dasa and Dasyu came to mean a slave and a thief, Pani came to mean trader and gave the name panya to commodity and pana to coin .

The unrestrained miscegenation evidenced by Rig Veda far exceeds that in Sumer and other ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia. Even the concept of Aryan people as we understand it today does not find any mention in the Vedic literature. There are individual Aryas but no tribe or family is mentioned as Aryan.<sup>7</sup> There is full acceptance of Magi, Angira, Atharvan, Pani, and other non-Aryan and pre-Aryan hierophants and priests. They have rather been deified and occupy the most eminent place among the Rig Vedic *prajapatis*, maharishis, and rishis. Many of them belong to the lowest sections of Vedic society. The most sacred of the Maharishis,—Atharvan is mentioned in the Rig Veda as one who has “drawn forth fire and offered sacrifice in ancient

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7. Nanimadhab Chaudhuri (The Rgvedic People) writes : "It is found that the only positive information of value that the above references give is that there were hostile princes recognised as Arya and that among the yajmanas and patrons



times". He is represented as emaciated black skinned man whose characteristics point to the likelihood of his belonging to an ancient indigenous priesthood.

Most of the rishi tribes appear to be mixed ones, more so the Bhrigus or Bharagavas, whom legend describes the family priests of daityas and danavas, and who some equate with Brugas of Thrace, reputed to be responsible for introducing the use of fire. At most places Bhrigu is not only mentioned as an Atharvan but the foremost amongst them—Atharvana Bhrguttamah (Culka Upanishad). In Rig Veda Bhrigu is not only found in company with Atharvan (X.92.10) but with Angiras also (VIII.43.13). This inter-relationship continues in the Yajus and Brahmana texts in such a way that the juxtaposition of Bhrigu and Angiras becomes exceedingly frequent, so much so, in Satapatha Brahmana sage Cyavana is designated either as a Bhargava or as Angirasa. It may be mentioned that the term atharvanah is used in the sense of "holy charms" and angirasah in the sense of "witchcraft charms". Brhaspati, the divine purohit

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of priests or rtvikas there were probably some who were recognised as Arya. Against this recognition of a few individuals as Arya, there is the very important fact that no tribe appearing in the Rig Veda is distinctly called Arya, neither the faithful Tritus among whom flourished Sudasa the famous hero of the Battle of Ten Kings nor the Purus whose king is called Arya.... We have examined the uses of the term in the text in different contexts. It is found roughly that the form 'Arya' is used once for individual (IV.30.18), once the Arya enemies alone are referred (IV.24.8) ; in four instances the form Arya is used for a class of people who were distinguished from the Dasyus (I.51.8; I.103.3; V.4.6; X.49.3). In nine instances Aryans are mentioned together with Dasas as enemies (VI.25.2, VI.60.1; VII.5.6; VII.87.1; V.34.6. X.38.3; X,83,1; X.102.3); in two instances it is used together with Dasas for a group or class of people. Dasas being described as partial



is also described as an Agirasa and Mahabharata calls him angirasam sreasthan. The Brahmin was still the fourth type of priest at the Vedic sacrifice and there is increasing insistence that he as well as the purohit should be Atharvan priest conversant with Atharvan ritual. It is significant that Panini was Vatsya Bhrigu—a Bhrigu belonging to a clan with cow's calf as totem.

During the time of Panini, the brahmins and the sudras had combined against the kshatriyas under the sudra king Mahapadma Nanda. It is quite likely that during the time of the earlier Parsurama in the epic period also, the low castes and the outcastes sided with the hierophants against the kshatriyas and in the process many of them got assimilated into various priestly clans. In this connection D.D.Kosambi observes : "The tension between the priest and the chief is the undercurrent in Vedic literature....It is a remarkable feature that there is nothing whatsoever in these

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to lands and sacrifices (VIII.51.9; X.86.19); in seven it is used signifying a homogeneous class, tribe group or groups of people enjoying the special favour of Agni, Indra, Aswins, etc. (I.56.5; I.59.2; I.17.21.; II.23.15; VIII.24.2; VIII.103.2) in two instances it is used to signify a particular class of people with a mark of distinction (Arya Vrata X.65.11; Arya Varna II.34.9), in two instances it refers to social groups (VII.21.9; Arya Yajmana I.130.8) in one instance it signifies class or group (Aryasyagavya VII.18.2) In VII.33.7 we have *tisrah arya Prajaha*. The meaning of the *rk.* is obscure. In one instance the form *Aryan* is used to denote the superior ways of life of a particular group of class.

"The use of the word 'Arya' in connection with Indra, Mitra, Varuna, etc. shows that the meaning cannot apply to all cases. Similarly it is difficult to account for the use of 'Arya' for *Trasadasyu* and 'Arya' for *Arna* and *Citraratha*."



rituals about fighting against non-Aryan enemies such as Panis, Dasyus or the like.”<sup>8</sup> The assimilation of Sudras and non-Aryans into the priestly class prevalent during the Paninian and pre-Paninian period came to end in the post Paninian period because the sudra successors of Mahapadma Nanda turned Buddhist. Asoka in particular tried to cut at the roots of priestly hegemony resulting in all the bitter enmity which the brahmins acquired against the sudras.

Panini has been placed by some Sanskrit scholars in the second half of the third century B.C. He has been placed by others before Buddha in the sixth century B.C. on the plea that he used the word “nirvana” (VIII.2.50) meaning “free from wind”, and not in the sense it acquired after Buddha. The only real date in ancient India is that of the death of Buddha i.e. 477 B.C. and Panini was accordingly placed in the sixth century B.C.

It is a sad commentary on the greatest scientific work of ancient Indian literature that its period can be fixed only by reference to Buddhist and Greek sources. The work does not throw any light on the time when Panini lived and the period when it was written. It is needless to give here the futile discussion that has gone on endlessly among Sanskrit scholars on the era of Panini based on the internal evidence in Asthadhyayi and the grammatical works of his successors. There is however a very strong traditional evidence of Panini's friendship with sudra king Mahapadma Nanda.

“Manjusrimulakalpa” discovered a few decades ago and translated by Mr. Jayaswal states, “In the capital of the Magadha-residents there will be brahmin controversialists.... the king will be surrounded by them. The king will give them riches.... His minister was a Buddhist brahmin

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8. D.D. Kosambi : An Introduction to the Study of Indian History.



Vararuchi. His great friend was a brahmin Panini by name.”<sup>9</sup> In one of the tales of “An Ocean of the Rivers of Stories” written by Somadeva, Katyayana tells Kanabhuti that “Varsha (who according to another tale lived at Patliputra during the reign of Nanda) had a great number of pupils. One of them was a great blockhead, by the name of Panini. He, tired of his service was sent away by the wife of Varsha. To do penance, he went aggrieved yet desirous of knowledge, to the Himalayas. There he obtained from Siva who was pleased with his fierce austerities, a new grammar which was the introduction to all sciences. Now he came back and challenged me to a disputation, and seven days passed on while our disputation proceeded. When on the eighth day, however, he was defeated by me, instantly Sive (appeared) in a cloud (and) raised a tremendous uproar. Thus my grammar which had been given to me by Indra, was destroyed on earth, and we all vanquished by Panini became fools.”<sup>10</sup>

Chinese traveller Hsuan Tsang who visited Panini's birth place and Patliputra in the seventh century A.D. recounts the traditional account of “Sabdavidya” as he calls Ashtadhyayi<sup>11</sup>. According to this tradition Panini received instructions from Ishvara Deva. When after incessant labour and putting forth all the power of his mind, Panini made a book of letters which contained a thousand slokas, each sloka of thirty two syllables, he sent it to the king who was exceedingly pleased with it. The king issued an edict that throughout his kingdom it should be taught to others and

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9. Quoted by Bhupendra Nath Datta in 'Studies in Indian Social Polity'.

10. Quoted by V.S. Agarwal in 'India as Known to Panini'.

11. Quoted by V.S. Agarwal in 'India as Known to Panini'.



whosoever should learn it should receive as his reward a thousand pieces of gold. There is no doubt that during and after the time of Panini the entire authority, power and machinery of the State was utilized to promote Paninian grammar and to suppress other grammatical systems.

It has been pointed out by some scholars that even though Panini's grammar has been studied for about 2,500 years, there are still many rules about the exact meaning and implication of which we are completely in the dark. There are several cases where later grammarians and commentators have thoroughly misunderstood the rules of Panini and sanctioned forms contrary to those of Panini. This is because Panini did not intend to cover the entire field of grammatical structure or to make *Ashtadhyayi* a complete anthology of grammatical rules current at that time in various schools in the sense in which *Vyadi's Sangraha* seems to have existed during Panini's times or at a somewhat later period.

In five important rules of his, Panini states that on principle he will exclude from his grammar certain subjects as they do not fall within his scope. Referring to a previous sutra he says (in 1.2.53) that : "Such matters will not be taught by me for it falls under the category of conventional terms, which are settled (literally, for it has the authority of a *sajna* or conventional term)". Panini speaks twice of *Unnadis* (though not of *Unnadi Sutras*) which deal with affixes and their formations. Another important branch of grammatical writings was familiar during those times under the name *paribhashas* which do not amend or criticise but teach the proper application of grammatical rule. The fact that not only some of Panini's sutras but also their *paribhashas* existed prior to *Ashtadhyayi* is borne out by the fact that some sutras of Panini indicate that such *paribhashas* were in existence and were required for a proper application of the rules. Such *paribhashas* are called *Jnapaka* by Panini.



Much of the criticism of Panini in this regard is due to the fact that Panini omitted or imperfectly expressed certain rules because these were in the common knowledge of his contemporaries. This was not the case with later grammarians as most of the grammatical literature of this period other than Ashtadhyayi had perished by then.

Panini's grammar was meant to be an auxilliary science to the Vedas. Many scholars have referred to the incompleteness of Ashtadhyayi in this respect also. Macdonell states : "(Panini) gives hundreds of rules about the Vedas but without completeness. His account of the Vedic language taken as a whole, shows many gaps, important matters being omitted while trifles are noticed. In this part of his work, Panini shows a decided incapacity to master his subject matter, attributing to the Vedas the most unbounded grammatical licence, especially in interchanging or dropping inflexions."<sup>12</sup> Whitney after comparing a number of Panini's Vedic rules with the evidence of the Vedic texts concluded that the former were quite inadequate for the purpose and stated : "What then was the use of his touching the subject of peculiarities at all."<sup>13</sup>

Here the Western Sanskritists have failed to understand the purpose of Panini. His grammar was not meant to be an auxilliary science to the Vedas. His aim was to provide justification for inaccuracies in the language of Vedas which had come to appear so as a result of the grammatical rules having become less flexible or consequent upon the spoken language having drifted away from the language of the Vedas. Paul Thieme in his monograph on Panini and the Vedas pointed out that the language of the sacred texts was used in sacrificial rites (yajnakarmani—Panini 1.2.34) as opposed

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12. A.A. Macdonell : History of Sanskrit Literature.

13. W.D. Whitney : Sanskrit Grammar.



to Bhasyam and that as such it could not be supposed to contain wrong word forms. He adds : "It is for this reason that Panini endeavours to justify Vedic words and usage that were alien to Bhasa by special rules only for the Vedas."<sup>14</sup>

Comparison has been made between Yaska, Unnadikaras and Panini from the point of view of derivational principle and of grammatical description. For Yaska there is no division of a word into prakriti and pratyaya. He simply lays down roots existing and non-existing in the word and a derivation therefrom. Unnadikaras make a regular division of a formation into its roots and terminations. they split the word into two—a root and a termination. Panini like the Unnadikaras assumes a two morpheme nature of a formation for the sake of its derivation but he strikes a new point of difference from the Unnadikaras. Their terminations are not infused with meaning. However, Panini in his derivations animates with meaning all the terminations of the *krdantas* as well as *taddhitas*.

The definition of pratipadika<sup>15</sup> as given in sutra 1.2.45 brings into foreground another important point. This definition implies that Panini started with the formation used and available in the language and then by taking out the termination, by factorising and division, arrives at the basic

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14. Paul Thieme : Panini and the Vedas.

15. M.D. Pandit in "Some Linguistic Principles of Panini's Grammar" (Indian Linguistic Vol. 24, 1963) defines pratipadika as follows : "A pratipadika is that meaningful part of a formation which is neither a dhatu, nor a termination, nor again a full form of termination. In other words a pratipadika is a non-dhatu, non-terminational and meaningful category which is left out after taking out the terminations of a nominal formation. This definition gives us a clue to determine the



norm. He did not start with any hypothetical norm and then go to account for the formation available in the language. Panini's approach appears to be purely structural.

There is a significant aspect of the difference between Panini's definition of a pratipadika and a dhatu. Sutra 1.2.45 defines pratipadika as *arthavadadhatuapratyayah pratipadikam* and sutra 1.3.1 describes dhatu as *bhuvadayo dhatuvah*. While the definition of a pratipadika given by Panini is of a procedural nature, that of dhatu is of an enumerative type, because he could not have laid the procedural type of definition for roots also. This is so because Sanskrit verbal forms are not of two but of three morpheme types (except in case of those in second conjunction). In between the root, and termination there are the vikaranas or infixes indicating conjunction of different roots. A procedural negative type of definition would have made it difficult to arrive at a pure base and would not have solved the problem of deciding the ganas or conjunctions which are indicated by *vikaranas* or infixes applied to the roots. Panini is able to achieve *laghava*—brevity—through this method which is his guiding principle as opposed to *gaurava*—lengthening—which would have been necessary if he had followed any other method. By giving an enumerative definition for the dhatus, he could have a separate dhatupatha enlisting all the roots.

Panini's Dhatupatha<sup>16</sup> contains 1993 roots including those

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way Panini approached the study of language. The negative part 'a' in the word 'apratyayah' in the definition is very important since it signifies the exclusion or negation of the termination from a usable form. The definition as it stands is a procedural type of definition giving out a procedure to find out a pratipadika from a given nominal formation".

16. G.B. Palsule ('A Brief Account of Different Dhatupathas') : describes



of *kandvadigana*. The roots are classified in ten major groups or classes called *ganas*, the basis of the classification being the manner in which the roots form their present stem. Referring to Panini choosing this system of classification, Whitney observes: "The present system is the most prominent and important part of the whole conjugation, since from the earliest period of the language its forms are much more frequent than those of all the other systems, together." Within the ten *ganas*—classes—there are *antarganas*—sub-classes—which are formed of roots which undergo a common operation.

The difficulty in understanding Panini properly is the result of those very technical devices which are considered as his real advance above all his predecessors, i.e. his attempt to economise expression. "Why Panini", says S.K Belvelkar, "should have elected to strain all his nerves to bring about a result which a students of grammar is often likely to regard as the curse of his lot is more than we can say. His object may have arisen, as suggested by Goldstucker, in the scarcity of the material for writing. In any case we have reason to assume that from the earliest times the sutras were accompanied by a traditional explanation of them."

Some of the significant devices used by Panini to bring

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Paniniyan Dhatupatha as follows : "Every root is given along with its meaning, these two forming one sentence, which is usually called dhatusutra. Generally only one meaning is assigned to a root and is given in the form of an active noun in the locative case, sometimes, however, it is given in the form of a bahuvrihi compound with -*artha* as a second member e.g. *gatyartha*, *sabdartha*, etc. The latter method being preferred when there are many roots against one meaning. The roots further accompanied by one or more anubandhas or the code letters indicating certain features of the root."



about brevity of expression is the use of *pratyaharas*—elliptical statements, *paribhashas*—canons of interpretation, *anubandhas*—significant endings, the formation of *ganas* consisting of words which undergo similar grammatical changes, invention of peculiar technical symbols and *anuvritti*—ommission of words which can be conveniently supplied from sense or from previous sutras, called by Panini *adhikara sutras*. It appears from Mahabhashya that the technical symbols were known before Panini and he seems to have only elaborated this device. Similarly *anubandhas* also do not seem to be Panini's invention. The *pratyaharas* contained in the fourteen Shivasutras, traditionally believed to have been revealed to Panini by god Shiva sounding his tabor, also seem to be the heritage of an earlier grammatical school because Shiva is named as a grammarian in some ancient works. The large number of *paribhashas* enunciated by Panini was already current in his day.

*Colebrooke's* reference to Panini as one wandering in a intricate maze with the key of the labyrinth continually slipping out of his hand has been mentioned earlier.<sup>17</sup> Wackernagel does not "see anything in Panini save the dim light of a rational plan and the deep night of historical chance, miserliness in words, love of ease, a breaking down of natural connections, the whole a whirlpool of caprice"<sup>18</sup> Referring to numerous concatenate digressions in Panini, Fadlegon states: "The associate digression which often interferes with the logic of division can be either due to what precedes or to what follows, or it arises from the wish to link together two logically divided subjects. Sometimes, however, a

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17. H.T.Colebrooke ; Miscellaneous Essays, London, 1837,

18. Quoted by K.M.K Sarma in Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali."



section is not limited to the subject expected by the reader according to the context but at the same time deals with subjects which in the author's mind are coherent with it."<sup>19</sup>

To the disparity of opinion among scholars about the merit of Panini's grammatical work has been added uncertainty as to which of his ideas are original and which borrowed. Further there is confusion as to whether the other ancient works are anterior or posterior to Ashtadhyayi. There has been endless discussion whether *pratishakhyas*, *phitsutras*<sup>20</sup> and scores of other grammatical works existed before or after Panini. The absence of any mention of Sakyamuni, Yajnavalkya or to Atharva Veda and *Upanishads* in Ashtadhyayi is discussed threadbare and far-reaching conclusions are drawn from this, ignoring other known facts. Panini has been mentioned as a hierophant who belonged to the Bhrigu gotra, which establishes his connection with Atharva Veda, so also does his being a Daksheya from his mother belonging to the tribe of Daksha another group of non-Aryan hierophants closely connected with Bhrigu. According to the legend both Bhrigu and Daksha were connected not only with Shiva but also with Angiras, Atharvan and Ribhus which establishes unmistakably the connection of Panini's ancestors with Atharva Veda.

Another question discussed in detail is the stage of Sanskrit language when Panini took it up and systematised it. Bhandarkar thinks that Panini's Sanskrit must be identified with that which preceded the Epics. According to

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19. Ibid.

20. c.f. G.V. Devasthali : *Phitsutras of Santanava*, University of Poona.

Referring to the chronological relationship between Panini and Santanava, Max Muller states : "As however, these sutras



Liebeck it does not differ from the language of Brahmanas and the Sutras which view is shared by Winternitz. Brahmanas and Aranyakas cover a very long period and contain a variety of languages. The language of the Aitareya Brahmana is far removed from that of Astadhyayi and contains some archaisms. The language of Satpatha Brahmana also differs from that of Panini and it contains a fairly large number of non-Paninian words. The same is the case with Taittiriya Aranyaka, which is believed to be definitely ante-Paninian. Aitareya Aranyaka contains so many linguistic vagaries that its language cannot in any way be related to that of Astadhyayi. Scholars generally believe that it is the language of *Sankhayana Aranyaka* that is closest to Panini's Sanskrit. This clearly indicates, as T.W. Rhys Davids had asserted that the Sanskrit language which formed the basis of Ashtadhyayi was not a colloquial language. Many writers have discussed why Panini has been misunderstood. The indefiniteness of some of these rules and obscurity of others itself shows that these particular rules were based on a non-colloquial language and were not distilled from the actual spoken languages of various tribes.

Doubt has been expressed regarding the genuineness of

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treat only of accent, and the accent is used in Vedic language only, the subject of Santanava's works would lead us to suppose that it was anterior to Panini" (Ancient Sanskrit Literature).

Comparing Phitsutras with Ashtadhyayi Goldstucker states : "Brief as it is , it is richer in many respects than the analogous chapter which Panini devoted to the same subject; and it would be inconceivable that Panini should bring forward this rule so much more incomplete in substance than the Phitsutras had they been the precursor of his work" (Panini : His Place in Sanskrit Literature).



some of the rules of Panini. In this connection Belvalkar states : "It may well be that some sections of the Sutas are post-Paninian interpolations, just as contrawise, other sections of the Sutas Panini may have bodily taken over from some earlier grammar."<sup>21</sup> The Balamanorma edition of Ashtadhyayi has only 3981 Sutas and according to Kasikavritti the number is 3983. The Balamanorma edition takes Sutas 4-4-166 and 4-1-167 as *Vartikas*. Goldstucker thinks that the number is 3996. Monier Williams is in agreement with him and according to Thumb the number is 3976. After discussing evidence furnished by Panini, *Katyayana*, *Patanjali* and the subsequent commentatorial literature, Kielhorn maintains that "the text given in the *Kasikavritti* contains 20 more Sutas than the original text."<sup>22</sup>

It is said that Panini by fixing the rules of Sanskrit grammar for all time to come, killed all original thinking and further development of Indian linguistics. There is enough evidence to show that subsequent grammarians, *Katyayana* and *Patanjali*, were richer minds and were equally if not more talented thinkers. *Katyayana*, in particular is believed to have much greater familiarity with the Vedas than Panini seemed to have. This is borne out by the Indian tradition according to which in case of differences between Panini and *Katyayana*, the opinion of *Katyayana* is to be accepted and in the event of differences between Panini, *Katyayana* and *Patanjali*, the views of *Patanjali* are to be preferred.

We know through *Patanjali*'s quotations that there were many *Vartikakaras* on Panini though only *Katyayana*'s *Vartikas* alone had the good fortune of being bequeathed to

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21. S.K. Belvalkar : System of Sanskrit Grammar.

22. F. Kielhorn : *Katyayana and Patanjali*.



posterity. If Katyayana had not exhibited his superior skill by finding faults with about half of Panini's sutras, tracing at least 10,000 imperfections and inaccuracies in them and if Patanjali had not found it necessary to answer him point by point in defence of his illustrious ancestor, Katyayana would have been lost to Indian linguistics as has been the case with other *Vartikakaras* on Panini.

Katyayana's Vartikas are known to posterity only through Patanjali's quotations in Mahabhasya ; and it has virtually been impossible to fix the exact number of his *Vartikas*. According to Kielhorn these Vartikas total 4293<sup>23</sup>. Kashinatha gives this number as 5052 in his Siddhantakamudi and Kielhorn states : "I cannot say that my attempt to reconstruct the work of Katyayana has in every particular been successful and the list of corrections at the end of this volume will show that further considerations made me change my views in one or two instances."<sup>24</sup>

According to Macdonell, Katyayana has written Vartikas on 1245 Sutas of Panini<sup>25</sup> Kielhorn observes that "...1713 are actually treated by Katyayana and Patanjali, nearly 600 rules are fully and 350 rules are partly quoted in Mahabhashya."<sup>26</sup> As there are 400 Sutas on which Patanjali alone has commented, the number of those commented by Katyayana alone would be 1313 according to Kielhorn.

Commenting on these Vartikas Kielhorn states : "It is true that Vartikas are not commentary on the rules of Panini's

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23. F. Kielshorn : Katyayana and Patanjali.

24. Ibid.

25. A.A. Macdonell : History of Sanskrit Literature.

26. F.Kielhorn : Katyayana and Patanjali.



grammar, and that it was not Katyayana's intention to explain the meaning and the import of these rules, as they have been explained, e.g. by the author of Kasikavritti. But it is in my opinion equally true that Katyayana in composing his vartikas did not propose to himself the task of finding fault with Panini, for he justifies the rules of his predecessor as often as he finds fault with them. So far from calling Katyayana an unfair antagonist of Panini, I would rather claim for him the title of a follower and judicious admirer of Panini, who dispassionately examines the rules laid down by his master, considers the objections, which have actually been or which might be raised by them, is even ready to defend or justify Panini and corrects, adds to, or abandons the rules propounded by him, only when no other course is left open."<sup>27</sup>

Kielhorn adds : "That Patanjali has refuted some of the objections, that he has rejected some of the additional rules of Katyayana, no student of Mahabhashya would think of denying. But it is altogether contrary to fact to say that all the Vartikas have been refuted by Patanjali or to maintain that the Mahabhashya has been composed for the justification of Panini. In proof of this assertion, it would suffice to refer the reader to the analysis of the part of Mahabhashya which I have given above and in which I have shown that more than half of the 135 Vartikas pointed out have been unreservedly adopted by Patanjali, but I will try to corroborate it by additional evidence. I have stated already that whereas in the case of Panini I.1.6. Katyayana only objects to words of that rule, Patanjali proves the rule to be superfluous; and that Katyayana defends Panini I.1.36 from an objection, his defence is not accepted and Panini's rule altered by Patanjali."<sup>28</sup>

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27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.



Goldstucker takes a different view. He thinks that "A Varttika of Katyayana is ...not a commentary which explains but an animadversion which completes. In proposing to himself to write Vartikas on Panini, Katyayana did not mean to justify or to defend the rules of Panini, but to find fault with them, and whosoever has gone through his work must avow that he has done so to his heart's content."<sup>29</sup>

Goldstucker further says : "If we take a summary view of the labours of Katyayana, we find that of the 3995 Sutras of Panini, more than 1500 offered him the opportunity of showing his superior skill, that his criticism called forth more than 4000 Vartikas, which at the lowest estimate contain 10,000 special cases comprised in his remarks. Having arrived at this point, let us ask—how could India resound with the fame of a work which was so imperfect as to contain at least 10,000 inaccuracies, omissions and mistakes."<sup>30</sup>

Commenting on this Weber states : "Through Goldstucker ...we then learn that Patanjali behaves much less like a commentator on Panini than like a defender of the latter against the unjust attacks of Katyayana, the author of the Vartikas. And this view is fully borne out by appearances."<sup>31</sup>

Agreeing with Weber, Dr. S. K. Belvalkar also says that Katyayana's object is to find fault with the Sutras of Panini<sup>32</sup> and his purpose was not merely to explain them. K. Madhava Krishna Sarma on the other hand maintains : "In proposing to himself to write *Vartikas* on Panini Katyayana's duty as commentator was not to justify or defend but to introduce

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29. Goldstucker : Panini—His Place in Sanskrit Literature.

30. Ibid.

31. Weber : Ind.Studies.

32. S.K.Belvalkar : Systems of Sanskrit Grammar.



the necessary modifications in order to make Panini keep abreast of later developments in the language. In fact he could not defend Panini, even embarking on a process which would have involved a good deal of tampering with the text. If a commentator starts with the deliberate object of defending an author whose work is really in need of some changes necessitated by lapses of time, the work turned out by him will no wise be critical ; neither will it stand the test of time....Instances are not wanting to show that Katyayana has sometimes defended (i.e. tried to find the desired meaning from some rules without altering them) Panini."<sup>33</sup>

Katyayana himself described his objective in the introductory Vartika in these words : "While common speech teaches us about words, their meanings and the mutual relations of these two, it is the distinctive function of grammar to restrict speech to correct words (as distinct from *apasabdas*) such restrictions (like many *laukika* and *Vaidika* ones) always being fruitful of reward." Katyayana regarded *vyakarna*—grammar—as a *dharma shastra* and having a richer knowledge of *Vaidika* literature than Panini, he was more puritan in grammatical matters than Panini.<sup>34</sup>

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33. K.M.Krishna Sarma : Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali.

34. K.M. Krishna Sarma writes : "Panini omits a large number of Vedic words, not only those occurring in Vajasaneyi-sanhita and the Satapatha Brahmana which are regarded by some as post-Paninian, but also those occurring in Rig Veda and Sama Veda. This can be explained only in two ways either he concentrated his attention only on the spoken language of his time and does not care much for the Vedic language or they (Vedic words) escape his knowledge. In either case it is proved beyond doubt that Katyayana is a greater Vedic scholar than Panini and that he comes to amend the *Ashtadhyayi* only after he has exhausted the Vedic literature existing in his time."



The Vartikas of Katyayana have been classified into four categories, viz. emendations, explanations, supplements, and refutations, each of these being further divided into two classes, historical and academic. The Vartikas concerned with linguistic changes are regarded as historical and others which deal with academic matters such as gauravalaghava etc., are called academic.

Even though Patanjali has been "unjust" to Katyayana and has been blamed for excessive zeal to defend Panini, he has in many ways paid greater tribute to Katyayana than he does to Panini. The Mahabhashya is primarily a commentary on Vartikas of Katyayana. This is a view held not only by modern Sanskritists but also by earlier Indian grammarians such as Punyaraja and Jinendrabuddhi. More than a commentator of Katyayana, Patanjali was an imitator of the man whose work he was criticising. He adopted Katyayana's methodology of discussing the Sutras of Panini. In this connection, F.Kielhorn observes : "He unreservedly adopted Katyayana's method of discussing the Sutras of Panini and like most imitators carried that method to extremes.....If by adopting such a course of procedure, Patanjali has defended Panini from some of the objections brought against him by Katyayana, it is on the other hand equally true that in many cases criticism is much more thoroughgoing and destructive than Katyayana's and that Panini has suffered more at his hands than at those of the Vartikakaras."<sup>35</sup>

Panini's treatment of Vedic language is somewhat unsatisfactory, leaving out of account a large number of Vedic words and using a few ungrammatical expressions. The works of Katyayana and Patanjali, on the other hand, bear the stamp of greater exactitude and comprehensiveness.

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35. F.Kielhorn : Katyayana and Patanjali.



Patanjali has commented upon 400 sutras of Panini apart from those on which Katyayana has written Varttikas. In view of the comprehensive nature of Katyayana and Patanjali's works, it is felt by some that only those Sutras of Panini which have been noted by Katyayana and Patanjali are genuine ones and all others are later interpolations. In this connection Hannes Skold remarks: "Where a Sutra is not expressly stated and explained in the Mahabhashya, we have enough reason to suppose that it did not exist in the original text itself nor the Sutra dependent upon it." Skold adds that the Ashtadhyayi originally ended with नोदात्तस्वरितोदयम् that the rest of the Sutras namely अगार्यकाश्यपगालवानाम् and the whole of the next, viz. अ आ इति are "later embroideries".<sup>36</sup>

Katyayana has been regarded by some scholars as a contemporary of Panini and by others to have followed him by a few generations. Goldstucker holds that "Panini and Katyayana belonged to different periods of Hindu antiquity." Reference by Patanjali in his commentary to "the Yavana besieged Ayodhya" and to "the Yavana besieged the Madhyamikas" have made some scholars to conclude that he was a contemporary of Manandros and Nagrajuna. they have thereby placed Patanjali in the first century B.C. Calculating backwards from Manandros and Nagarjuna on the basis of references in Greek and Buddhist literature, it becomes possible to place Panini and Katyayana in the second half of the fourth century B.C. or in early third century B.C.

Goldstucker thinks that Katyayana could not have been a contemporary of Panini, as is maintained by Max Muller. Max Muller gives a plausible sequence of the three works of Panini and Katyayana; (1) the Pratisakhya of Katyayana,

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36. Quoted by K.M. Krishna Sarma in "Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali".



(2) Ashtadhyayi, and (3) Vartikas of Katyayana. Goldstucker refers to the possibility that two different Katyayanans wrote the Pratisakhya and the *Vartikas*.<sup>37</sup>

The possibility that both Panini and Katyayana edited, elaborated and annotated two different types of material existing before them, cannot be ruled out. Panini meant to deal in his Ashtadhyayi with both the *Vaidika* language as well as the Sanskrit language current during his times. Katyayana, however, seems to have a limited purpose in his Pratisakhya and attempted to deal with the facts of pronunciation, accent and the particular mode of sounding a syllable or word in connection with a specific work only. This is indicated by the name of his work—Vajasaneyi Pratisakhya—dealing only with the White Yajur Veda.

There is an interesting aspect of the name of Katyayana. He seems to have descended from Katyayani, one of the two wives of the celebrated, semi-legendary rishi Yajnavalkya. If it was so he and Panini belonged to two different families of hierophants, hostility, if not bitter animosity between which goes back to Rig Vedic times. According to Rig Veda Bhrigu the priestly clan to which Panini belonged was an enemy of king Sudasa of the battle of ten kings referred to in the tenth Mandala. Eversince tradition describes all the famous Bhrigus or Bharagavas—Chyavana, Richika, Saunaka, Sukra, Jamadagani, Parasurama—as enemies of the warrior classes, the kshatriyas, and there is a streak of extreme orthodoxy among them. Bhrigu's son was Chyavana, another arch-rishi. Rishi Chyavana was born when his mother Puloma was carried off by danava Puloman, of whom Bhrigus were family priests.

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37. Goldstucker : Panini—His Place in Sanskrit Literature.



Puloman's own daughter Sachi was carried off by Indra and became his wife under the name Indrani. Bhrigu had sided with Daksha in his enmity toward Indra who had married his daughter Sati against his wishes. Daksha's slighting treatment of Indra so mortified Sati that she committed suicide by burning herself, thus the term sati was applied to all wives who immolated themselves.

Chyavana's son rishi Aurva was mortal enemy of the kshatriyas and undertook great austerities to acquire strength for his vengeance against the kshatriyas. He was at last prevailed upon to expel the fire of his wrath at the mouth of the ocean which is believed to be still boiling with the fire of his wrath. Richika the son of Aurva also spent his whole life in meditation and when old married the young daughter of Gadhi king of Kanyakubja. When his wife Satyavati was pregnant, rishi Richika prepared a magical pottage for her so that his son, though from a kshatriya woman, could have all the qualities of a brahmin. This pottage was by chance eaten by his mother-in-law who gave birth to rishi Vishwamitra, while Satyavati bore him a son named Jamadagni.

Jamadagni, according to Mahabharata, acquired complete mastery over the secrets of *Shastras*. Subsequently he wanted to marry the beautiful daughter Renuka of solar king Renu. Afraid of incurring the wrath of such a powerful rishi the king consented but their enmity became greater. Renuka gave birth to five sons. Jamadagni suspected that his kshatriya wife was not "pure of heart" and asked his sons to kill her. All refused excepting Parasurama, who obeying his father struck his mother's head with his axe. Tradition also recounts that Jamadagni was killed by the sons of king Kartavirya and it was in revenge that Parasurama tried to destroy the entire kshatriya race.

There are many other traditional tales about Bhrigu rishis,



but only one more needs to be mentioned here, which shows their enmity towards Indra. Rishi Sukra who has been described as the preceptor and physician of the daityas and the assuras, had the power of restoring the dead to life. Indra sent his daughter Jayanti to seduce him and to know the secret. When she failed Brihaspati sent his son Kacha. Sukra's daughter Devayani fell in love with him. Angered at this, the assuras killed Kacha and fed him to the jackals. Learning of this, Sukra, through his spiritual powers, called out the digested bits of the youth and Kacha stood before the sage perfectly whole. He was murdered again and again and restored to life every time. In the end he declined to make Devyani his wife. Devyani cursed Kacha so that he lost the life restoring mantra which he had acquired. In turn Kacha cursed Devyani to be the wife of a kshatriya. Devyani according to the tradition married Yayati, for whom Indra sent his own chariot when he invited him to heaven. Sukra is also described by tradition as Magha-bhava—son of the Magha. It is most likely that the Maghas, together with Bhrigus, Atharvans and Angiras, constituted the most powerful group of hierophants in ancient India, and Panini belonged to this fraternity.

We know much less about the ancestors of Katyayana except that tradition associates him with Yajnavalkya and Indra. The story in the Kathasaritsagar—An Ocean of the Rivers of Stories—according to which Katyayana tells Varsha that he had been given his grammar by Indra himself has been referred to previously. Katyayana is a descendant of Yajavalkya which family of hierophants seems to be much less orthodox and tradition has recounted their association with various kings. Yajnavalkya imparted the mysteries of yoga to Janaka, the king of Videha. In Mahabharata Yajnavalkya is reported to have attended the royal consecration ceremony of Yudhisthira and according to



Satpatha Brahmana Yajnavalkya was the spiritual adviser of Janaka, father of Sita. Tradition also states that Yajnavalkya denounced brahmanical avarice and often refused to be associated with 'wretched and inefficient' brahmins. He declared that there were two wheels on the chariot of every man's life, *daiva* or destiny and *purusha-kara* or man's efforts. Tradition associates many remarkable stories with Yajnavalkya such as establishing his superiority at the congress of sages summoned by Janaka and decrying as meaningless the expiatory sacrifices by his guru mighty sage Vaisampayana.

Yajnavalkya has been regarded as the most remarkable personage of Indian pre-history. While the story how White Yajur Veda came to be written has an anti-brahmanical touch, while Yajur Veda itself shows his unprecedented clarity of mind. *Yajasaneyi Samhita* associated with Yajnavalkya has been called White Yajur Veda because it is believed to be one of the few 'clear', 'bright' and methodically arranged works in the entire Vaidika literature.

There are over 1800 sub-divisions of the brahmin caste today. Till the post-Paninian brahmanical revival transformed them into a homogeneous community, the priests of different tribes and clans—*dasas*, *danavas*, *doms*, *assuras*, *daityas*, *panis*, etc. and also those of the various Aryan tribes subsisted separately. Some of these priestly groups existed in bitter opposition to the others. It would seem from the above that Panini and Katyayana belonged to two bitterly opposed families of priests and probably to two different schools of grammar.

Reference has been made in grammatical literature to a grammatical work in a hundred thousand slokas called *Sangraha*—anthology—whose author is Vyadi. Patanjali illustrating the second Vartika on Panini's rule II.3.65 states



: "Beautiful indeed is Dakshayana's creation of the Sangraha." This shows that Vyadi and Dakshayana are one and the same grammarian. Dakshayana was not only a descendant of Dhaksha but of Dakshi also and the latter at least in the third generation (c.f. Panini IV. 1.95). In the case of Panini also we know on the authority of Patanjali that his mother bore the name Dakshi (Karika 1.1.20). Vyadi was therefore a near relative of Panini. Bhartarihari in his Vakyapadiya states in the end of the second chapter : "After Patanjali had obtained the aid of the grammarians who had mastered the new science in their full text and in their abridged form and after he had acquired the Sangraha (of Vyadi) he.....collected all the original nyayas in the Mahabhashya."

Patanjali has given the name of his mother as Gonika in the last words on a Karika to Panini. The theory that Gonika is a variation of Gonda, put forward by some, makes Patanjali belong to the Gond, a non-Aryan tribe. Max Muller states : "Patanjali the author of the great commentary is sometimes identified with Pingala, and on this view Pingala is called the younger brother or at least the descendant of Panini." Pingala (c.150 B. C.) is believed to have edited the metrical matters discussd in Brahmanas and according to tradition he was the incarnation of a great naga king. The connection of Patanjali with Atharva Veda and therefore with Bhrgu and Panini is clear from the internal evidence of Mahabhashya. Among the beginning of the four Vedas quoted by Patanjali that of the Atharvan name शंनो देवीरमिष्य finds the place. His preference for the Atharvan is also shown by another instance in which he could have quoted the beginning of any of the other three Vedas or at least that of the Rig instead of Atharva Veda. Patanjali also gives us information about his having resided in Kashmir where he seems to have received schooling in Paninian tradition. Patanjali,



accordingly, felt duty bound to refute Katyayana and took Panini's side in such a partisan manner that Goldstucker had to point out : "He sometimes overdoes his defence of Panini and becomes unjust to Katyayana."<sup>38</sup>

With Patanjali we have the beginning of philosophical treatment of grammatical facts. Philosophical investigations into the sense of the word had not troubled Panini's mind. Gautama and the Nyaya schools were either contemporary of Patanjali or somewhat anterior to him. Other schools of Hindu philosophy had begun to crystalise by that time. If any school of philosophy or grammar or any grammatical or philosophical work is not mentioned by Panini or Patanjali, it only proves that liturgical and literary accumulation of priestly classes and hierophants of scores of tribes, clans and racial groups existed in those times as distinct cultural material of different sections of the kaleidoscopic Indian society. Panini and Patanjali acknowledged only that part of the heritage which belonged to their and allied priestly classes and ignored those of others. It was only a few centuries after Panini that there was a consolidation of these variegated priestly communities and pooling together of such liturgical and literary material of those communities as could serve the ends of brahmanical revival.

After Patanjali linguistics became subservient to philosophy and metaphysics. The schools of philosophy were many but their speculations remained circumscribed by the needs of interpreting Vedas and Vedangas. Even speculation about vak, sabda and related linguistic phenomena did not advance beyond that. The main schools were Mimansa founded by Jaimini (c.200 B. C.), Nyaya founded by Gautama, (also placed in the last few centuries of the pre-Christian era) and Vaiseshika founded by Kanda (placed in

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38. Goldstucker : Panini—His Place in Sanskrit Literature.



the last two centuries B.C.). The Maimanska and the Nyaya schools, representing two different philosophical attitudes as they did, had often opposing approach to linguistic phenomena. The Mimanska school also called Purva mimansa is different from the later Mimansa—Uttar-mimansa or Vedanta. Purva-mimansa is also called Vakya-sastra or the study of words. Nyaya system is sometimes called Taraka-vidya or the science of discussion and its founder Gautama has been described as the Aristotle of Indian thought. Vaiseshika school constitutes a supplement to the Nyaya school and its founder Kanada is also called Aulaka (from uluka-owl). From this name derived from owl, from the theory of atoms propounded by Vaiseshikas and from other philosophical concepts of that school, they are believed by some to be inspired by ancient Greek philosophy.

It is interesting that even the Buddhist and Jain linguistic speculations remained as limited to the Paninian methodology as the Brahmanical ones. Chandra school founded by Buddhist Chandragomin (lowest date 650 A.D.) is noteworthy in the matter of greater brevity and precision than the Paninian school. Chandragomin's grammar was meant as an improvement on that of Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali. The total number of Chandragomin's Sutras is 3100 as against about 4000 of Panini, but his really original contribution amounts to about 35 Suras which have been incorporated in the Kasika. Chandragomin even adopts some Vedic roots in his dhatupatha though his main purpose was to supply for the benefit of the Buddhists a grammar that would be free from the traditional Brahmanical elements.

The Jain schools of grammar—Jainendra, Sakatayana and Ramachandra schools—were as Paninian in outlook as the Buddhist. The Jainendra school is connected with the Digembara Jains and the Sakatayana school with Svetambara



Jains. The traditional author of the aphorisms of the grammar of the Jainendra school is stated to be Jina or Mahavira, the last of the Tirthankaras, though the foundation of this school dates from about the same time as that of Chandra. Referring to these aphorisms, Belvalkar states: "The Jainendra grammar is altogether wanting in originality. It is nothing but Panini and the Vartikas condensed as much as possible."

The total number of the Sutras of the Ramachandra school founded by Jain monk Ramachandra (born 1088 A.D.) is 4500 while the Sarasvata school founded by Bopadeva (born 1250 A.D.) reduces the entire subject to 700 sutras as against Panini's 4000.

The largest number of thinkers of this period belong to the orthodox Hindu school. They used grammatical terms for philosophic speculation and their approach to philology was purely metaphysical. The six schools of Hindu philosophy codified if not founded by Gautama, Kanada, Kapila, Patanjali, Jaimini and Badarayana had many commentators, prominent among them were Vatsyayana (A.D.400), Prasastapada (c.A.D.430), Sabara (c.450 A.D.) and Isvarakrishna (c.450 A.D.)<sup>39</sup>

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39. What Benjamin Walker has written under 'Philosophy' in "Hindu Word—An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism" holds true of Indian Linguistics also. He states: "Hindu philosophy ranks among man's earliest attempts to answer the riddles of the universe and solve problems of human existence. But there are not a few scholars who believe that it was limited by its presuppositions and had expended itself by the third century B.C. providing nothing fresh after that time. All subsequent speculation was confined to commentaries and dissertations on the Vedas and Upanishads in the light of the six systems, and represented as it were 'an endless threshing of all straw'. It was characterised by extreme scholasticism, elaboration, subtlety and systematisation. ....For centuries the



Two writers of a little later period who were more concerned with philology than with philosophy were Jayaditya and Bhartarihari. The *Kasika* of Jayaditya (A.D.660) is a commentary on *Ashtadhyayi* in which the rules are explained clearly giving all the *anuvrittis* and numerous illustrations for each rule. Chinese pilgrim I-tsing mentioned Jayaditya of Kashmir as the author of grammatical work called *vritti-sutra*, which is now generally believed to be *Kasika*—a joint work of Jayaditya and Vamana. The first two chapters of *Kasika* come from Jayaditya while the last three are assigned to Vamana who probably lived shortly after him. According to I-tsing Jayaditya died about 660 A.D. The objective of *Kasika* was to incorporate in the Paninian system the various improvements that had been made by Chandragomin and other Buddhist grammarians. Out of the commentaries on *Kasika*, the most noteworthy is *Padamanjari* by Haradatta.

One of the greatest minds of the period was Bhartarihari (A.D.570-651) who by a thorough analysis of the entire structure of Sanskrit grammar showed "how the problem of relation between knowledge and its object is finally transformed into the problem of relation between language and meaning." Referring to Bhartarihari's contribution to linguistics, Gauri Nath Sastri says<sup>40</sup> : "The uniqueness of Bhartarihari's philosophy lies in the fact that it refuses to be affiliated to orthodox idealism or materialism. As a matter of historical fact, Bhartarihari's philosophy has been interpreted differently by different writers. The Vedantists have sought to represent Bhartarihari as an exponent of

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antagonisms prevailed, wearing down the opponents but producing nothing fruitful and ending in an arid metaphysical region that is the despair of students."

40. Gauri Nath Sastri : *Philosophy of Word and Meaning*.



idealist monoism. Again Bhartarihari's sabda brahman - the ultimate reality - has been interpreted as an evolutionary principle. The cryptic nature of Bhartarihari's *ipse dixits* has been responsible for these diverse and conflicting interpretations. We are acquainted with the idealists who make thought, in one way or the other, the fountain of the world of reality, subjective and objective. We are also familiar with the materialist position which deduces thought and matter from an insentient principle. But to assert that the Word is the source of cosmos is a novel proposition."

The manner in which Bhartarihari elaborated the concepts of grammatical science to arrive at the conclusion "that the phenomenal world is a logical construction constituted by apprehensible meanings of intelligible language"<sup>41</sup> shows the arid waste into which even the finest minds had entered by then. According to tradition Bhartarihari alternated seven times in his choice between a monastic and worldly life and on one occasion when he entered the monastery, there was carriage waiting nearby lest he changed his mind. In addition to Vakyapadiya, Bhartarihari is believed to be the author of *Sringara-sataka* dealing with love and women.

Commenting on the period after Bhartarihari, Belvalkar states: "The last stage makes a progressive deterioration in the study of grammar. We have in the first place the rise of a number of new and popular schools of grammar intended to simplify the science for the enlightenment of laity. Following the wake of the times we have, side by side numerous recasts of the Ashtadhyayi tending towards the same object. The lowest stage is reached when we come to the popular hand-books of the eighteenth century."<sup>42</sup>

41. Hemanta Nath Ganguli : Philosophy of Logical Construction.

42. S.K. Belvalkar : Systems of Sanskrit Grammar.



Referring to post-Paninian Sanskrit linguistics, D.D. Kosambi observes : "Panini killed all preceding grammatical systems nearly killed the future development of language....The language suffered from its long, monopolistic association with a class that had no interest in techniques.. Prose virtually disappeared from high literary Sanskrit. Words that survived in literary usage took on so many different supplementary meanings that a good Sanskrit text cannot be interpreted without a commentary."<sup>43</sup>

There is no gain saying the fact that after the period of Brahmanical revival there has been no breaking of new ground by Indian grammarians. There are excellent commentaries and annotations at the most, but no noteworthy original contribution to the science of language..

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43. D.D. Kosambi : Introduction to the Study of Indian History.



## HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL ROOTS OF THE PRAKRIT AND APABHRAMSA LANGUAGES

Prakrit is the common term employed to indicate a large variety of non-colloquial languages and dialects, attested by specimens, traces or allusions in secular as well as religious literature in India from about 500 B.C., (whereafter Sanskrit is stated to have gradually ceased to be a spoken language) to the 10th century A.D. when the modern Indian languages are believed to have had their beginning. This period of one and a half millennium in the linguistic history of India, described as Middle Indo-Aryan, presents a confusing picture. The same language has been described differently by different grammarians and equally often widely different languages in different periods given the same name. The classical definition of Prakrit excluded from the group Pali, while others treat it as marking the beginning of the Prakrit period. Sometimes several varieties of 'incorrect Sanskrit' some of which used by *Mahayana* school of Buddhists in their 'mixed Sanskrit' works are included in this group and at others Inscriptional Prakrits of the period of Asoka and those discovered in Chinese Turkistan are excluded from it. Even though many varieties of Prakrit were admittedly mixed languages, somewhat "less artificial than Sanskrit,"<sup>1</sup> and

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1. Prabhatchandra Chakravarry : Linguistic Speculations of the Hindus. —University of Calcutta, 1933.



embraced vast areas inhabiting several clans, tribes and embryonic nationalities, these are put forward as the spoken languages of those times and as precursor of modern Indian languages.

The languages of this period are divided into three groups—the Early Prakrits (Pali and Old Magadhi—500 B.C. to 100 A.D.), Middle Prakrits (Sauraseni, Magadhi and their variations—100 A.D. to 600 A.D.) and Later Prakrits (Apabhramsas—600 A.D. to 1100 A.D.)<sup>2</sup> The relationship between the Middle Prakrits and Later Prakrits or Apabhramsa is believed to be that of mother and daughter, the two stages generally having the same names. The grammarians of those times claimed the blood relationship

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2. S.M. Katre gives the following classification of Prakrit languages in "Prakrit Languages and Their Contribution to Indian Culture" :—

- (1) **RELIGIOUS PRAKRITS** : Pali, the language of Southern canons and post-canonical works; Ardhamagadhi, the language of oldest Jaina sutras also described as Arsa : the Jaina varieties of Maharashtra, Sauraseni and Apabhramsas, attested in the narrative literature forming an extensive branch of Jaina literature.
- (2) **LITERARY** : Maharashtra, Sauraseni, Magadhi, Paisachi and Apabhramsa and their sub-varieties.
- (3) **DRAMATIC** : Maharashtra, Sauraseni, Magadhi and their varieties : Old Ardhamagadhi attested in the plays of Asvaghosa; minor dialects such as Dhakki and Takki.
- (4) **PRAKRITS DESCRIBED BY THE GRAMMARIANS** : these include five or six dialects attested in Sanskrit plays, Maharashtra, Sauraseni, Magadhi, Paisachi, Culika-Paisachi and Apabhramsa, with several dialects. In this category are included the descriptions of Prakrits given in rhetorical or musical compositions such as Bharata's



of both Prakrits and Apabhraṃsas with Sanskrit, dividing the languages of India mainly into three stages, namely Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhraṃsa. Dandin, Bhamaha and Bhojaraja have all recognised this three-fold classification.

The period of Early Prakrits was one of the break-down of slave economy in the 'Midlands' and Eastern India. The epoch of slavery lasted a few centuries longer in the north-west of the Indian sub-continent and in Afghanistan—areas a little less affected by the *Mahabharata* wars. Slaves were never as numerous in India as in the civilizations of the West. There was a vast hinterland, particularly to the east, where the slaves and the craftsmen, now much fallen in status,<sup>3</sup> could run away. This had retarded, in this country,

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Natyasastra, or Gīṭāṅkara or Namiśadhu's commentary on Rudrata's Kavyalankara.

- (5) EXTRA INDIAN PRAKRITS : the language of Prakrit Dharmmapada, fragments of which were discovered in Khotan, written in *Kharosthi* characters; *Niya* and Khotanese Prakrits, the language of documents found in Central Asia.
- (6) INSCRIPTIONAL PRAKRITS : from the period of Asoka downwards, written in Brahmi and Kharosthi characters, found within the whole of India and part of Ceylon. Under these are also to be considered copper plate grants and coin legends, thus covering the whole domain of littic and metal records.
- (7) POPULAR SANSKRIT : Hindu, Buddhist and Jain. These varieties contain such usages which were not recognised as proper for refined Sanskrit of classical variety.
3. Aryan Vaisyas had by then sunk from Aryanhood to slavery. It is borne out by the reference, in Gita that "Even though woman, vaisya and the sudra slave are all born for slavery they can obtain salvation in heaven if they follow me".



the growth of an economy based upon the large-scale exploitation of slave labour and of a wide-spread urban life built thereon. This period of the gradual break-down of slave-economy, everywhere marked by intense mental activity, was particularly of great spiritual and intellectual awakening in India. North India was, in the period immediately before Buddha, bursting out of the 'dark ages' which commenced with the immense destruction of the *Mahabharata* wars and the subsequent inroads into the Gangetic valley from west, south and east by Nagas and other tribes,<sup>4</sup> often abetted and joined by the slaves and unprivileged classes in the towns. The unparalleled upsurge this had unleashed is indicated by the fact that even Arjuna complained that in these battles against the Nagas and others when he reached for his famous magical <sup>5</sup> weapons "they would not come to him." Lord Krishna who destroyed the city of Benares by hurling a flaming *diskos* and who restored the burnt city, could later

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4. S.A. Dange observes in *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*: "Contrary to expectations of either side, the war resulted in such a massacre of both the victors and the vanquished, that the winning Pandavas were completely bankrupt at the end of the struggle and almost all the leading men, kings and princes, fine warriors and generals fell on the battlefield. All the states which participated in the struggle as also the allied Gana-Sanghas were thoroughly weakened and shattered by the fierceness of the massacre. The slave-owners' states and the ruling leaders of the Gana-Sanghas having been weakened, the Naga, Nishada and other tribes got a breathing space and in order to win back their old position began to attack the once powerful, much feared and much hated Arya *kulas* and their armies."
  5. J.D. Bernal points out in *Science and Society* that at that period good steel was so rare and highly prized that weapons made out of it were deemed to be magical.



do nothing when his own town *Dwarika* in Kathiawar was attacked and a civil war broke out. Helpless, he ordered the evacuation of the inhabitants to Prabhasa, while the ruling groups were killing one another or were being massacred by the Nishadas.

Agriculture was growing on a vast scale and rose to a higher level as the technical achievements of the epoch of slavery became more widespread and closer to the people with their dispersal from the dwindling or disappearing towns to the rural areas. Use of iron diverted from the making of weapons became more common as it grew more plentiful with the shifting of the centre of gravity from Hastinapura to minerally rich Bihar.<sup>6</sup> However, the trend towards feudalism retarded the advance of productive techniques, which had in India already remained incompletely developed because of the lack of the full flowering of slave economy. As the demand for useful sciences became less and less, the intellectual efforts of the people were directed towards a new feature of civilization, organised religious faiths.

This period was noteworthy for 'Wanderers'—Paribhajakas (Sanskrit Parivrajakas)—scholars who wandered from place to place for more than half the year engaging in conversational discussion on matters of ethics, philosophy and nature-lore. It was as much a quest for knowledge as the teaching of one's own system of beliefs. These Wanderers included women and also students who were represented as begging, as did students in medieval

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6. A.L. Basham states in *The Wonder that was India* : "Chief source of iron in India was South Bihar and the control of the route from the iron producing areas around the modern Ranchi may well have been one of the chief factors in the early rise of Magadha power".



Europe. There were halls put up for their accommodation and for discussions. Pavilions had been constructed in the groves adjoining settlements and there were rest-houses (*chowtries*) everywhere for them. These wandering scholars were not *munis* or *Vratyas* of the earlier period, nor were they *vanaprasthas* or *sanyasis* of the later one. There was great freedom of thought resulting in a bewildering variety of doctrines. Those holding similar set of opinions sometimes organised themselves into *Sanghas*. The Buddhist order was called Sakyaputtiya Samanas and the Jain order, which was older than the Buddhist, was called Niganthas—the unfettered. There must have been scores of other, like *Ajivakas*— 'The Men of the Livelihood'—a sect quite widespread till the time of Asoka, whose intellectual activities, unlike those of the Buddhists and Jains, are now unknown to us.

This was the period when *Jataka* tales were created and enriched by the people<sup>7</sup> mostly on the basis of the earlier folk heritage. Only a small proportion of these have come down to us through their Buddhist modifications. This was also the period when the material, some of which later formed the voluminous *Mahabharata*, was created by the people in the form of Akhanas (Sanskrit Akhyanas). These too were the times when ballads were written and minstrels sang about the idealised tribal heroes of the past. This

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7. S.K. Chatterji : "The historical traditions, ballads and songs current among the born Aryans, among the mixed Aryans and non-Aryan people who had become Aryanised, were told or sung in the vernacular forms of Aryan, and then altered to Sanskrit to form the nuclei of the Mahabharata and the Puranas, in which particularly in the Mahabharata, many a dialectal form has survived." (Indo-Aryan and Hindi).



material gathered out of the common cultural property<sup>8</sup> and "from gems falling from the lips of the people", later provided material for Valmiki's "Ramayana". With the sharpening of the class conflict, as mythology gave place to "true religion" and as religion ossified into dogma, the number of *vanaprasthas*—hermits—increased and Vedic orthodoxy began to be given a more elaborate world of phantasy, but one now with a class structure. These speculations, many of them inspired by intellectual freedom and thirst for knowledge, later provided germinal bases for *Upanisads* and *Puranas*.

The languages of those creations of the people differed not only from area to area but also according to the nature of the work. Those works would sometimes be in the language of the tribe occupying a dominant position in the area, at others in a mixture of the tribal speeches, arising mainly out of the wanderings of *Parivrajakas* from one tribal area to the other, which must have made the evolution of a common vocabulary and a somewhat common non-colloquial language inevitable. Asokan Magadhi was probably such a mixer of Magadhan dialects later modified according to the area of the inscription.<sup>9</sup> This language

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8. T.W.Rhys-Davids : "We find then, that single verses, single poems, and single Cantos, had all been in existence before the work assumed its present shape. This is very suggestive as to the manner of growth not only of this book, but of all the Indian literature of this period. It grew up in the schools and was the result rather of communistic than of individual effort."
  9. Rhys Davids : "M.Senart has shown conclusively, by an exhaustive study of the whole subject that they (the inscriptions) at no time, either in spelling or in vocabulary, present us with a faithful picture of any vernacular." (Buddhist India)



commonly described as Old Magadhi was probably less artificial than its posterior Magadhi of the Prakrit grammarians. It gave grammatical structure to various Inscriptional Prakrits and no doubt was represented, in vocabulary at least, in a fairly comprehensive manner in Pali. The artificial character of Asokan Magadhi and Pali is generally recognised and these are not, therefore, included among the Classical Prakrits, though as we shall see later, the former were nearer the spoken languages than the latter.

As a medium of the literature of religious expression, Pali had a very long career from the third century B.C. to eleventh century A.D. Its earliest stage is available in metrical *gathas* which are interspersed with prose passages in Pali canons. Next comes the language of canonical prose passages and after that the prose of early non-canonical works such as the *Malindapanha*, the language of prose commentaries etc. Last comes the language of poetical work which approximates the pattern laid down in the Sanskrit literature.

This language of the *Hinayana* school of Buddhism is not a uniform language having clear-cut features. On the other hand it shows the influence of a large number of dialects of those times in different stages of evolution, although in its linguistic features it is the earliest representative of the stage described as Middle Indo-Aryan.

There is no doubt about the artificial character of Pali, which was not a language of Magadha but of 'Midlands'. It probably resulted from the mixing up of the dialects of Mathura and Ujjain. King of "Mathura" on Jamuna, bore the title of Avanti-Putto during Buddha's time and it seems that a branch of the royal family at Ujjain had come to rule over Saurasena with its capital at "Madhura" (the present Mathura and mentioned by Al-Beruni as Mahura). This non-colloquial language is likely to have arisen as the court language of that kingdom. This "Madhura" was visited by



Buddha and was the residence of Maha Kaccana, one of his most influential disciples to whom tradition attributes the first grammatical treatment of the Pali language and after whom the oldest Pali grammar is named. Scholars of the eminence of Sylvain Levi and Prof. Heinrich Luders have given ample evidence to show that Buddha's discourses were first composed in some dialect of Magadha and were later translated into Pali. Subsequently, Pali got driven out of its home—the 'Midlands'—and became merely the language of schools in India, as far south as Kancipura and Tanjore.

The period of Middle or Classical Prakrits begins with the first century A.D. and Vararuchi one of the earliest Prakrit grammarians is believed to be one of the 'nine gems' at the court of Vikramaditya at Ujjain. Incidentally, the Sakas also of Ujjain were the first important dynasty to use Sanskrit, their inscription at Girnar being the earliest written document we possess. As the process of feudalization advanced and as the feudal serfdom spread and consolidated despite the temporary set-back under the Mauryas, literary languages based upon or nearer the language of the people also underwent a change and the Middle Prakrit period marks the increasing artificialization of the literary languages. Curious dialects half-way between the spoken and the dead languages came into existence, sometimes called '*Mixed Sanskrit*', at others '*Mixed Prakrit*'. Literary languages born out of the colloquial speeches got their terminations Sanskritized, spoken words were altered to make them look more learned and thus came into existence literary forms wholly or partly artificial with no existence in living speech. As the Prakrits lost the advantage of being nearer the languages of the people, their replacement by Sanskrit as a literary language became inevitable. The more these hybrids became like Sanskrit, the easier it was for the new ruling class to impose their language just as they had imposed their domination. Thus we have under the Guptas the



unprecedented development of the Sanskrit language.<sup>10</sup>

Changes in religion and social life were taking place side by side with changes in language. Indian feudalism, inferior economically and militarily as it was, suffered repeated set-back as wave after wave of conquerors came pouring down from the north-west in the centuries preceding and following the Christian era. First came the Bactrian Greeks who set up republics in the Panjab. Then came Sakas who reached as far as Mathura, Malwa and Kathiawar. They were followed by Pahlavas and the Kusanas, the latter one of the six Chinese tribes of Yueh Chih, who had driven Sakas into India. In the east of the country also, there was a general picture of anarchy after the Mauryan Empire. With deterioration in agriculture and other means of production, the goods produced became less and less. As a result of that

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10. T.W. Rhys-Davids gives the following list of languages of India till the middle of the first millennium A.D. :—

- (1) The dialects spoken by the Aryan invaders of India, and by the Dravidians, and Kolarian inhabitants they found there.
- (2) Ancient High Indian, the Vedic.
- (3) The dialects spoken by the Aryans, now often united by marriage and by political union with the Dravidians, in their settlements either along the spurs of the Himalaya range from Kashmir to Nepal, or down the Indus Valley and then across to Avanti, or along the valleys of the Jumna and the Ganges.
- (4) Second High Indian, Brahmanic, the literary language of the Brahmanas and Upanisads.
- (5) The vernaculars from Gandhara to Magdha at the time of the rise of Buddhism, not so divergent probably as not be more or less mutually intelligible.



the share-out became more and more coercive and rigid. The increasing misery of the exploited classes was reflected in the promises of the greater loveliness of the life hereafter, provided one led the good life, that of obedience. The lack of stability of Indian feudalism, with its several inherent defects, was further heightened during this period by the paucity of public works so necessary for tropical agriculture. The needed stability was provided by the caste and the joint family systems, but this further deformed India's semi-feudalism. The caste system did so by consolidating forms of exploitation based on slavery side by side with the development of feudal relations and the joint family system

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- (6) A conversational dialect, based probably on the local dialect of Savatthi, the capital of Kosala, and in general use among Kosala officials, among merchants, and among the more cultured classes not only throughout the Kosala dominions, but east and west from Delhi to Patna and north and south from Savatthi to Avanti.
  - (7) Middle High Indian, Pali, the literary language based on No.6, probably in the form in which it was spoken in Avanti.
  - (8) The Asoka dialect, founded on No.6, especially as spoken at Patna, but much influenced by the aim at approximation to Nos.7 and 11
  - (9) The Ardha-Magadhi, the dialect of Jain Angas.
  - (10) The Lena dialect of the cave inscriptions from the second century B.C. onwards based on No.8 but approximating more and more to the next, No.11, until it merges altogether into it.
  - (11) Standard High Indian, Sanskrit—elaborated, as to form and vocabulary, out of No 4; but greatly enriched by words first taken from Nos. 5 to 7, and then brought back as to form into harmony with No. 4. For long the literary language only
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tended to eliminate large landed property which was one of the principal features of feudalism in Europe.

These developments not only tore India to fragments but resulted in much deterioration in productive resources with the consequent set-back to trade within the country and with the West. Much of the technical knowledge was also lost. The production of chemically pure iron, sample of which is available in the iron pillar at Mehrauli, and the art of carving out, polishing and transporting Asokan pillars weighing as much as fifty tons and measuring some forty feet, are some of the technical achievements of the early period of feudalism which were lost as feudalism became finally encrusted in the post-Gupta period. Drain of gold resulting from trade with India was an important cause of the financial difficulties of the Roman Empire from the reign of Nero onwards.<sup>11</sup> How much India lost from the virtual

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of the priestly schools, it was first used in inscriptions and coins from the second century A.D. onwards and from the fourth and fifth centuries onwards became the *lingua franca* for all India.

(12) The Vernaculars of India of the fifth century A.D. and onwards.

(13) Prakrit, the literary form of these vernaculars, and specially of Maharastri, These are derived, not from No. 11 (Sanskrit), but from No. 12, the later forms of the sister dialects to No.6. " (Buddhist India).

Only Nos. (1), (3), (5) and (12) of the above languages were the actual spoken languages of the people.

11. Cf, E.H. Warmington : Commerce between the Roman Empire and India; Cambridge, 1928



ceasing of this trade during the millennium after the Guptas is born out by the fact that many of the achievement which made possible a leap forward from feudalism to capitalism in Europe came from China through that country's trade with Byzantium.<sup>12</sup> The heavy plough designed in Central Asia or Siberia, requiring the harnessing of a team of as many as eight oxen, which provided the technological basis of medieval society did not come to India. Feudalism was the age of the horse in the field and on the road. In India horse always remained a luxury animal and the horse-collar and the horse-shoe, though invented in Central Asia, reached India much later than elsewhere. The isolation of the tribes and village communities was further solidified by the development of the 'village system' resulting from 'the domestic union of agriculture and manufacturing pursuits'. This 'village system' was based upon independent caste organisations attending to different items of work and on the institution of village headman; the latter though incorporated into the quasi-feudal system, also prevented the growth of contractual relations between the landlord and the vassal which constituted the very basis of European feudalism.

The above circumstances, though they made the merger of tribal languages on any large scale impossible, could not hold back the emergence of some artificial class-languages of the trading communities which were firmly organised

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12. Jack Lindsay states in *Byzantium Into Europe* : "The contribution of Central Asia and Central Europe (to the making of modern Europe) are in fact hard to separate from one another. We must discard later political geography and realise that in those days something of single region stretched from Western Europe to the Altai mountains"



into guilds. Sanskrit, however, remained enthroned as the language of law and scholarship though not generally of administration and trade. Even the grammars of the Middle Prakrits were written in Sanskrit. It is no accident that Buddhism and Jainism continued to be current among the mercantile classes almost upto the end of the first millennium A.D. and Pali, Ardha-Magadhi and Magadhi, driven from the places of their origin, continued to be nurtured by these mercantile communities in Central and South India. The trading communities stood to lose most from constant violence and warfare very much discouraged by these religions. It is also not an accident that the only great empire during the periods, though necessarily feudal in nature, was by Harsa, who was described by Hsuan Tsang as a Vaisya.<sup>13</sup>

Saurasena was during those time the name of the territory around Mathura. The most important of the Middle Prakrit—Sauraseni seems to have arisen under the influence of the trading communities of Mathura and the neighbouring cities. "Madhura" on Jumna is barely mentioned during Buddha's times, but it is described in Malindapanha as one of the most famous places in India. Though Saurasena kingdom extended for a short while only from modern Lahore to modern Allahabad, the *Vaisyas*, organised in their guilds, continued to retain their importance in Mathura and other towns in Northern India. Later Harsa, himself a *vaisya*, when reviving the glory of the Gupta epoch, also gave a new

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13. Hsuan Tsang. Translated by Watters. Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta refers to a newly discovered Buddhist work *Manjusrimulakalpa* which mentions Harsha as a *vaisya* and describes in glowing terms his wars against the Brahmin kings of West Bengal ; (Studies in Indian Social Polity).



impetus to the Sauraseni Prakrit. This Sauraseni in its Apabhramsa form again received a fillip when the Gurjara-Pratiharas, also belonging to a low cast, set up their kingdom at Kanyakubj in the Saurasena area. They encouraged trade and brought about prosperity by building vast irrigation works. One of them, was the lake at Bhojpur near Bhopal 250 square miles in area, later destroyed by Muslim invaders, which remains till today the greatest achievement of such irrigation works in India.

Undue emphasis has been given to the presence of Prakrits in Sanskrit dramas and this is taken as a proof of the Prakrits being the spoken languages. In dramas the characters talk, not the vernaculars, but literary Prakrits. At the time "when the dramas were written everyone in ordinary daily life spoke neither Sanskrit nor Prakrit, but simply the vernacular"<sup>14</sup>. Dr. S. K. Chatterji has also emphasized the fact that "the artificial character of most of the literary forms of Prakrits has also to be taken into consideration."<sup>15</sup> The most important among these, the Sauraseni, "shows greater adhesion to Sanskrit than other forms of Prakrit."<sup>16</sup> Maharastri has now been recognised as somewhat later form of Sauraseni, and as a language of 'the great kingdom' of Doab and not that of Maharastra.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Sauraseni and Maharastri are not employed as the languages of different

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14. Rhys Davisa : Buddhist India.

15. S.K. Chatterji : Indo-Aryan and Hindi.

16. Prabhat Chandra Chakravarti : The Linguistic Speculations of the Hindus.

17. S.A. Dange does not seem to be correct in stating : "The point is that Maharastri whose existence can be traced back as a dialect, to pre-Buddhist period (sixth century B.C.) whose grammar was written down by 200 B.C, which was accepted and used as a state language by the Satavahans became the



people but of different kinds of compositions, Maharastri for poetry and Sauraseni for prose.<sup>18</sup> The dialectal miscegenation in the Middle Prakrits and the large varieties of each one of them, itself proves that these were not colloquial speeches. Their artificial nature is also borne out by the mixing up of Sanskrit grammatical forms with them.

The third group of Prakrits, the Apabhramsas, is believed to be linguistically a stage in the development of the Indo-Aryan. The New Indo-Aryan speeches are supposed to have gone through this between the sixth and twelfth centuries A.D. The term Apabhramsa is used here as the name of a literary dialect in which poetic works were composed between 500 A.D. and 1200 A.D. and which was regarded as Apabhramsa by the authors themselves and by the Prakrit grammarians. There were, however, many varieties of the Apabhramsa language and Markanday calls his chief Apabhramsa as Nagarapabhramsa. He expressly counts it with Maharastri and Sauraseni, the Prakrits of Western India referred to above.

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Marathi language through centuries of development." (Notes on Medieval Marathi Literature—Indian Literature No.2 of 1952)

In this connection Woolner observes in Introduction to Prakrits : "For he (Vararuchi) seems to use the term not as a proper noun but as a laudatory or descriptive expression, meaning the Prakrit of the great kingdom, (i.e. of the famed country of the Doab and Rajputana) and therefore the principal Prakrit... At all events, whatever interpretation may be given to the term, there can be no doubt that, as a matter of fact, the dialect so called is Western Hindi and has no one point in common with Marathi, in which the latter differs from Western Hindi."

18. Prabhatchandra Chakravarti : Linguistic Speculations of the Hindus.



The view that modern languages of Northern India descended from Apabhramsa was first put forward by G.A. Grierson, who, in the Introductory Volume to the Linguistic Survey of India proposed a hypothetical Apabhramsa as preceding each new Indo Aryan dialect. This assumption, though universally followed by subsequent writers on the subject, is unsupported by documentary evidence discovered so far. Few writers have cared to discuss how *Apabhramsa* which was referred to as a language of the Abhiras by early grammarians came later to be used by Jaina writers in Gujarat, Rajasthan and South India for the composition of literary works.

A chronological and regional study of the *Apabhramsa* literature in its space-time context would bear out how erroneous it is to trace the ancestry of modern Northern Indian languages to any Apabhramsa language spoken in the whole or major parts of North India. The *Apabhramsas* did fully reflect the considerable changes which had taken place by the second half of the first millennium A.D. in the various spoken languages of the people. The term Apabhramsa was, however, merely a common name for the several non-colloquial languages which arose as a result of the mixing up of the languages of Abhiras and related tribes with those of the people they came to rule over in Northern, western and Central India during that period.

It is in Bharata's *Natyasastra* (330 A.D.) that we come across the first real reference to Apabhramsa where it is mentioned as *vibhrasta*, distinct from Sanskrit and Desi and as the "dialect of the Abhiras." Bharata assigns to Apabhramsa the position of a barbarous language spoken



by the nomad people who rear cattle, sheep, horses and camels (Bh. 17, 47, 48, 55). Three centuries later Apabhramsa attains the status of a dialect of poetry (*Kavyalankara* I .16, 26.). This literary status of Apabhramsa is confirmed by the pride in the ability of composition in Apabhramsa found in the copper plates of Dharasena II of Valabhi in Kathiawar (600 A.D.). Kanada's recognition of Apabhramsa in his Prakrit grammar points to the same conclusion. In the 9th century Rudrata regarded Apabhramsa as a generic term for provincial dialects which were many in number and in the 10th century Rajasekhra described Apabhramsa as a literary language equal in status to Sanskrit and Prakrit. In the 11th century Purusottama, an 'eastern' Buddhist Prakrit grammarian, regarded Apabhramsa as the speech of the elite—*sistas*—and asks us to refer to the usage of the cultured people for the characteristics of Apabhramsa. Another commentator Simhadeva in his commentary on Vagbhat's *Vagbhatalankara* locates these Apabhramsa dialects in the Dravidian provinces.<sup>19</sup>

The above changes in the nature and status of Apabhramsa cease to be confusing if we study its growth and development in relation to the history of the Abhiras. According to *Mahabharata*, where we find the earliest reference to the Abhiras, these tribes were living in the Panjab. Near about the beginning of the Christian era, they migrated to Gujarat, Kathiawar and the neighbouring areas under the pressure of fresh waves of invaders from the north-west. This is confirmed by minor edict of 181 A.D. found in Kathiawar which contains a reference to Abhira commander Ruderbhati. An inscription at Nasik of 300 A.D.

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19. Cf. G. V. Tagore : Historical Grammar of Apabhramsa.



makes a mention of the Abhira king Ishwarsen. From an inscription on Samuder Gupta's iron pillar at Allahabad, it appears that Abhiras had by then come to dominate over Malwa, Rajasthan and had spread as far as Jhansi. Some of these tribes seem to have later reached further east and south. Ahirora in Mirzapur got its name from Abhiras and so also the area from Tapti to Devgarh. There were settlements of Abhiras in Khandesh, where they seem to have set up several clan-guilds. In course of time Sakas and Gurjaras seem to have got mixed up with the Abhiras. Hunas too later got absorbed into them, after they had dispersed the earlier tribes of Rajasthan and settled in their places. These tribes provided some of the strongest dynasties of the middle ages and most of the present Rajput clans seem to have arisen from them. Finding the Hindu society frozen into an impregnable caste system and failing to get a place in it, these tribes joined the Jain religion and their courts became the patrons of Jain saints and of the Jain men of letters. When after the 7th century these feudal principalities grew in importance and influence their court languages, generally born out of the mixture of the Abhira and Gurjara dialects with the local tongues, also developed into literary languages.

These *Apabhramsas* received a further fillip when the Gurjara-Pratihara Kingdom under Mihira Bhoja and Mahendrapala revived the glory of the Harsa and Gupta empires. Even though the capital of their empire had shifted to Kanauj, the language of their courts continued to retain Gujarati and Rajasthani elements. Most of the *Apabhramsa* works which have so far come to light are in this '*Jain-Gurjar Apabhramsa*'. Since Grierson traced the origin of Modern Hindi to the splitting up of Sauraseni *Apabhramsa*, scores of *Apabhramsa* works have been traced; and hardly a single one of them can be said to be in a language which



can be described as the earlier form of Khari Boli Hindi. In this connection Shiv Prasad Singh observes; "As a result of the coming into light of a large number of works in the Apabhramsas, a lost link has become available in the study of the new Indo-Aryan languages, but unfortunately this immense material is of little use from the point of view of the study of Hindi. It is not that these do not provide any assistance in understanding the development of the Hindi language. It is so because there is not a single work among these which can be regarded as the earlier form of Hindi."<sup>20</sup> The only Apabhramsa work so far traced which has any connection with any 'dialect' of Western Hindi is 'Prakrit Painglam' which has old Braj elements.<sup>21</sup> The oldest available 'Hindi' Ramayana of the period, the one by Chomuh Sayanbhu is in Old Avadhi, if it can be ascribed to any single language.

Khari Boli in its older form did exist during those times side by side with other languages and dialects. If no work in the 'Apabhramsa form' of Khari Boli is available, it is because Khari Boli was not during that period the court language of any kingdom. This also would show conclusively that Apharamsas were not earlier forms of the current spoken languages but were merely class-languages which arose at the various courts. Delhi and the neighbouring areas had their own kingdom under the Tomars only for a short time in the twelfth century and the inscription in the Palam Baoli (1280 A.D.) which refers to Tomars and to the reign of later 'Saka kings' Sahavadina (Shaha-buddin), Khuduvadina (Qutab-uddin) and Asamasadina (Shams-ud-Din) is more akin to old Bhangru (Haryanvi of Gurgaon) than to old Khari Boli.

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20. Shiv Prasad Singh: Old Braj Elements in Prakrit Painglam: Kalpana, Hyderabad, September, 1955.

21. Ibid.



Even when the Abhira and Gurjara principalities <sup>22</sup> suffered a decline, the trading communities continued to nourish *Apabhramsas* which Hemchandra and others distinguished from the spoken languages. The mercantile communities in the South and Central India had been patronizing the Jain religion all these centuries. Trading activities, less dislocated in these regions than in North India, increased markedly with the return of stability and improved agriculture and crafts. Vijjanagara was at that time described by Paes as more populous than Rome and contained 100,000 houses. Merchant corporations had by then acquired importance in Deccan also. The increase in the influence of these merchant communities further helped the Jain-Gurjara *Apabhramsa* to flower into the great literary language of the Digamber Jains and into a speech of *Sistas*.

There is no doubt that *Apabhramssa* literature, the published or unpublished records of which are available today, shares at least in essentials the main features of the languages spoken during those times, but it is equally incontestable that these *Apabhramsas* were not the actual spoken languages of the people and were like the earlier Prakrits artificial languages or class-jargons. Unless the term *Apabhramsa* is applied, as it is sometimes done, to the tertiary stage of the Middle Indo-Aryan language, the records of which are not available today, it cannot be said that modern Indian languages have come into existence as a result of the splitting up of these literary languages. Though, undoubtedly, reflecting the colloquial speeches of those times, these non-colloquial class languages could not have given birth to the spoken languages of later times.

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22. Excavations near Kannauj by the Archaeological Department have unearthed numerous Jain antiquities all belonging to the period of the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty.



The common people are the great force that creates all the material and spiritual wealth. They are unsurpassed in creative genius and are the real authors of literary and cultural works, above all of languages in which this heritage is enshrined like a pearl in a shell. They nurtured the perennial stream of the living speech with countless processes and stages of development going on continually. While the artificial languages drawn out of this mainstream could be divided into three or more clear-cut stages, it would be impossible to similarly divide the living languages which, though always changing, are never different.

Kabir said a few centuries later that Sanskrit is like stagnant well-water and spoken languages are like a flowing stream. It is from these spoken language, still limited to tribes and nascent nationalities, which had always flowed on in their beds, self-sustained, self-moving and apart that we should trace the ancestry of modern Indian languages and not from the artificial literary languages which were as parasitic in their growth as were the classes which created them.



## MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL CONDITIONS IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

After the Apabhramsa languages we come to a period when modern Indian languages are supposed to have had their beginning. Hindi is generally believed to have come into existence during this period along with Panjabi, Gujarati, Rajasthani, etc., as a result of the splitting up of Sauraseni Apabhramsa. No reason is generally given for the sudden appearance of Early Hindi during this period except that it is sometimes mentioned that the *bhakti kavya* of Early Hindi arose under the impact of Islam on India. The great humanistic movement popularly called *bhakti* is supposed to have come, as described by Grierson, like "a flash of lightning" over the darkness of Indian mind and thought. Some have merely emphasized the fact that the *bhakti* movement came to North from the South without giving any reason for it. It has not been generally realised that this movement marked the confluence of two streams of Indian thought which had been running parallel for almost a millennium.

The non-colloquial nature of the Apabhramsas and Prakrits has already been discussed above and it has been explained that the common colloquial speeches of the great mass of unlettered people did not grow out of difficult artificial languages which their progenitors indisputably could not know and did not speak. We have seen that side by side with the rise and disappearance of several artificial languages or class-jargons, the colloquial speeches of today



have continued to live on the lips of the people. During that time the gradual process of simplification of the colloquial language had gone uninterruptedly, along with the increasing simplification of the process of labour in several departments of life. The slow reduction of inflexion and the imperceptible progress all the time from synthesis to analysis had no doubt reached a stage in the various languages of tribes and nascent nationalities when their distance from our present languages was not much. Many of the complex changes and developments, adoptions and adaptations which have contributed to the making of our languages had been mainly, if not wholly, achieved by that time and these had to a large extent acquired that richness of inflexion which enables us today to capture the whole territory of emphasis and suggestions which were difficult for our ancestors. The emergence of modern Indian languages had, however, yet to await the growth of mercantile economy, large-scale trade between tribes and nationalities and the development of a 'national market' before the colloquial speeches of those times could grow and coalesce into 'national' languages of today.

It is, therefore, necessary, to study the material and spiritual conditions on the eve of the Early Hindi period before we can correctly appraise the nature of the literary languages of that period; whether they marked the beginning of Modern Hindi language or were merely non-colloquial languages like those discussed earlier.

Indian culture did not perish under the onslaught of Islam as did that of Iran. It tended to withdraw itself more and more into the closed circle of its orthodox traditions. The Muslims did not have any fertilizing effect on the society in India as they did on that of Europe by transmitting the scientific knowledge of those times through their occupation



of Spain. The battle between the various classes in India had been going on ceaselessly, though only a scanty record of it is available in the literature of various non-Hindu and Hindu creeds and sects. The Muslims, by striking a death-blow to the already waning influence of *ksatriyas*, contributed largely to increase in the authority and personal power of brahmins over the Hindu masses. This led to the ever-widening and more rigid application of cast restrictions and to the general acceptance by the entire non-muslim-Indian society of the jurisdiction of the brahmins.

It is wrong to think that before the Muslims came to India the entire population of this sub-continent professed Hindu religion. It can be said with a great measure of certainty on the basis of literature that has come down to us that a great number of the people of India, if not a majority of them, did not in the first millennium A.D. believe in what is now called Hinduism.<sup>1</sup>

The feudal reordering of society tends to make useful sciences unnecessary. In India this was accompanied by a complete ossification of scientific thinking, resulting from the superstructure which grew out of the peculiar nature of our feudal society, some defects of which have been mentioned in a previous chapter. One element of the superstructure which profoundly affected the basis was the growth of the complex social structure of caste system, which became increasingly rigid and unalterable. It did not actually originate from the *varnas* of the epoch of slavery but arose out of tribal affiliations and professional associations which got continually elaborated in the beginning of the Christian

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1. Prof. Hopkins states in 'Religions of India': "Brahminism has always been an island in a sea. Even in the Brahmanic age there is evidence to show that it was the isolated belief of a comparatively small group of minds."



era by the development of new crafts and through the introduction of new racial groups.<sup>2</sup> This process got accelerated by the large number of incoming tribes during those centuries.

The second element was the development of the theory of transmigration of soul. It went a long way in meeting the spiritual needs of a system, which offered nothing except perpetual slavery and utter hopelessness to the exploited sections of the society, by holding out afterlife promises even to the most exploited and the most wretched of human beings. The Buddhist theory of Nirvana - a state neither of being nor annihilation - or the traditional hell of the Muslims and the Christians were hardly enough to meet the needs of the new social order in India. By seeking to make exploitation and the social misery resulting therefrom acceptable as pre-destined and inevitable, without the need for much coercion, the new superstructure greatly lessened and deformed class-struggle, thereby imparting a stagnancy and an unchangeability to the system.

This superstructure also had, as its necessary part, the Six Systems of Salvation—*Nyaya*, *Vaisesika*, *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Mimamsa* and *Vedanta*. The first two *Nyaya* (Analysis) and *Vaisesika* ("the School of Individual Characteristics") which were complementary to each other, were rather schools of logic and epistemology and had some elements of scientific thinking. However, by the second and third century, when Patanjali wrote his *Yogasutras*, these systems were fast on the wane and later virtually merged into a single school. In the early Middle Ages, when the ascetic temper prevailed, the third and fourth systems—the *Sankhya* and *Yoga*—

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2. This is evidenced by craftswise summary of caste groups given in *Ethnography (Castes and Tribes)* by Sir Athelstane Baines—Strassburg - 1913.



became the dominant cultural force, the latter more than the former, because it strove for greater ascetic aloofness and more of 'conquest by flight' over the evils of new system. Subsequently, as agriculture and urban life became prosperous, religious opinion began to shape itself into a new form. It consisted in taking for granted or ignoring the social evils, which had by then become somewhat less appalling. This brought to the fore the fifth and sixth Systems of Salvation—*Mimamsa* and *Uttara Mimamsa* or *Vedanta*. Hindu Philosophy or the Six Systems of Salvation had evidently no room for another form of religious opinion which developed later—that of protest against some unbearable evils and of throwing oneself into agitation for some particular reforms. This later form of religious opinion, much of which largely contributed to the *nirgun bhakti* movement, had, therefore, to draw, not only in content but also in form, on the various non-Hindu beliefs and forms of religious opinion which were current side by side with the Six Systems of Hindu Philosophy referred to above.

The religious opinions, both inside and outside the loose system of beliefs which later began to be described as Hinduism, were divided into *Astika* and *Nastika*. The former were split into *Vedic* and *non-Vedic* and the latter included *Buddhists*, *Jains*, *Ajivakas* and scores of other sects which were dominant intellectual forces till the middle of the first millenium A.D. The Vedic school had six Systems referred to above. The Vedanta finally acquired the greatest popularity amongst these six and had several mutually contradictory schools—*Advaitavad*, *Dvaitavad*, *Vasistadvaitavad*, *Sudhadvaitavad*, etc. The different meanings these schools gave to the Vedic scriptures later gave birth to *Saiva*, *Sakta*, *Pashupata*, *Ganapatya*, *Saur* and scores of similar sects; each one of these had *Bhashyas* of its own, on either Upanisads, the Brahm-sutra or the Gita and sometimes on all the three. Shankracharya (788 ? to 820 A. D.) who

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established the glory of Vedic philosophy was a Tamil or a Malabar Saivite and he regarded most of the above sects as non-Vedic.

The non-Vedic *Astikas* which Manu described as *Nastikas* also seem to have existed in several schools, though the records of only a few of these are now available. Amongst these *Pancharatra* sects have left behind an extensive literature. Their *granthas* have been mentioned as 108 in number and there seems to have been an almost equal number of *Sanhitas*, though only a few of these are yet available in print. There is reference to other extensive literature by these sects, much of which seems to have been lost. Following the tradition of *Bhagavatas* they gave a cosmological basis to the various myths of *Vasudeva-Krishna*. This provided inspiration for a great devotional movement. In the South India, where urban economy had grown undisturbed, records are available from the seventh to the eleventh century, of an ever-increasing number of devotional singers who, enraptured with *bhakti*, used to sing *bhajanas* from one temple to the other. The Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas exercised greater influence on these *bhajanas* than the *Sanhitas* though these devotees were both *Vaisnavites* and *Saivites*. This movement gave South India ten *Alawar* saints and their literature. In the North, *Pancharatra sanhitas*, *Visnu Purana* and *Sri Bhashya* acquired great popularity amongst the Hindus and Mathura grew into a powerful centre of this movement—trade and trading communities having by then shifted to Kanyakubj (Kannauj) the neighbouring town on Ganges—a river more suited to riverine trade. So powerful was the lure of Mathura that saints as eminent as Ramanujam (1017-1137 A.D.) left their sacred temples and came to live there. This movement was the direct predecessor of the *sagun bhakti* which at its apex produced Sur and Tulsi.



The above forms of Vedic and non-Vedic religious opinions though evolved to serve the privileged minority, did not, however, remain unaffected by the repeated onslaughts of popular beliefs. As the uprush of mass-forces again and again gathered volcanic proportions and as new phases of class-struggle acquired cyclonic intensity after their inevitable dissipation, the beliefs of the ruling class underwent a sea-change. The kaleidoscopic culture pattern of Hinduism thus resulted from a fierce class struggle which has ceaselessly raged within Indian society and it is the common people who have largely determined the present character of Hinduism though it generally continues to be used against them. The ten *avataras* of the Vaisnava cult show how radically the common beliefs transformed Hindu religion in the early Middle Ages. Later the Krishna cult developed as synthesis of several heroes from many ages and many parts of India. Emerging as a banal pastoralism and a luxuriant eroticism, which too was a form of protest during those times,<sup>3</sup> it grew into the cults of child-god *Bala-Gopala* and *Radhika* in the later half of the first millennium A.D. The common people used these as symbols of protest just as the child-Christ and Mary became in Europe the symbols of "the whole rebellion of man against fate; the whole protest against divine law; the whole contempt of man for human law as its outcome; the whole unutterable

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3. Bishnu Dey : "There was very little scope for freedom in those days and little growth of consciousness. The only two ways were the sophistication of sex and the tendency to rally obstinately behind the unorthodox gods and goddesses—facts which we still find true in the more remote villages. Let us call this mentality for convenience, Humanism, within the medieval world and then we explain the way the people had their own compensation rather than compromises". 'Us' National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1943.



fury of human nature beating itself against the walls of its prison house".<sup>4</sup> The people continued to re-shape old forms of protest taken over by the privileged minority and evolved new ones, drawing all the time on the myths and rituals of their folk tradition. The greater the oppression, the more dynamic became the uprush of popular beliefs so much so the ruling class was again and again constrained to compromise and to assimilate those beliefs. "It is this process of revolt and assimilation which accounts for the exceptional complexity of Hindu mythology with its 30,000,000 so-called gods and goddesses. First rejected, later tolerated and finally assimilated, these gods and goddesses together with innumerable pre-Aryan rituals and customs....survive as evidence of the way in which the popular pre-Aryan imagination has triumphed insidiously over the orthodox mind."<sup>5</sup>

The third stream of religious opinion in the beginning *Nastika* and anti-Vedic flowed on in full tide till the coming of Muslims. Scores of non-Hindu sects and creeds had then, perforce, either to reconcile themselves to some position in Hindu social order or slide into Islam. There were many such social groups till the beginning of this century, which had Muslim names but were continuing to adhere to their earlier beliefs and practices. The Census Reports have, decade after decade, recorded Muslim *Yogis* and where in Bengal and Bihar these Muslims were not recorded as *Yogis*, their caste has been mentioned as '*Joga*'. This phenomenon must have been quite prevalent during the times of Kabir.

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4. Henry Adams : quoted from *Time, the Refreshing River* by Joseph Needham.

5. John Irwin : *Class Struggle in Indian History and Culture*—Modern Quarterly, London, New Series—Volume 1, No. 2, March 1946.



No explanation is, therefore, really necessary for Kabir having a Muslim name while following and preaching non-Muslim practices. We shall see later that these beliefs were also mainly non-Hindu in tradition. Scores of Muslim poets in Bengal have left behind *ulbansis*, the verse-form for which Kabir is so famous.<sup>6</sup> Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayana<sup>7</sup> has pointed out that this tradition was inherited from *Sidhs*, *Nathpanthis* and *Sahjyanis* of the preceding centuries.

Throughout this period there were several sects and creeds which because of their non-Vedic or anti-Vedic nature were considered outside the fold of Hinduism. Though there is evidence of some *Nastika* sects which believed in Vedas, all non-Vedic sects were generally declared *Nastika*. Manu described those who criticised the Vedas as *Nastika* and Kuluka Bhat in his commentary on Manu also regarded all those who did not believe in the other world as *Nastika*. Sri Krishana Dhurjat Misra mentions six sects as *Nastikas* (1) Charvaka (2) Madhyamik Buddhists (3) Yogachar Buddhists (4) Sautrantic Buddhists (5) Vaibhashic Buddhists, and (6) Digamber Jains.<sup>8</sup> This would show that the term *Nastika* was generally applied to those sections of society which did not believe in practices and precepts which later began to be associated with *Hinduism*. A study of the extant literature of that period would show that their number was very large. The complete literature of one Buddhist sect 'Sthavirvad' has now become available. Its volume is three times that of the Mahabharata. This would indicate how extensive must have been the literature of non-Hindu sects and creeds though most of it has now perished. Each one of these creeds

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6. Harzari Prasad Dwivedi : *Madhyakaleen Dharam Sadhna*.

7. Rahul Sankrityayana : *Hindi Kavyadhara*.

8. Quoted in *Madhyakaleen Dharam Sadhana*.



*Kapaloika, Laluka, Vama, Bhairav, Ajivika, Digambara, Vajaryani, Sahjyani* etc. had sects within sects according to their interpretation of Yogic, Tantric, Saive, Sakta or other beliefs.

At the end of the first millennium A.D. The Hindu society tended to become more and more rigid. With the coming of the Muslims, the entire Indian society had to contend against an altogether new force. Many of the non-Vedic sects sought to be absorbed into the Vedic system of beliefs. Similarly the non-Hindu sects tried to modify their beliefs in order to come nearer to Hindu society. After the eleventh and twelfth century A.D., there seems to have arisen a widespread urge among the non-Hindu sects to find some place in the Hindu social order. The *Vashnavites, Saivites* and *Shaktas* who so far held non-Vedic beliefs found it quite easy to drift toward the Vedic *Vashnavites, Saivites* and *Shaktas*. The Nath sect too became one of the rallying points of those non-Hindu groups and creeds which were resisting sliding into Islam but were unable to find any place in the Hindu society. Mention has been made in *Yogsampradaya Vishkriti* of a meeting of the *Vam-maragis* near the source of Trishul-Ganga about 90 miles east of Dhavalgiri, which Gorakhnath attended on invitatiuon. The *Vam-maragis* could not accept all the conditions of Gorakhanath and failed to be accepted into his creed. There is another instance of a similar meeting at Gorakhbansi (near modern Calcutta) where all the Sakta worshippers of the goddess-Kali, are stated to have joined his fold. There are instances of sects completely changing their anti-Vedic beliefs or of giving them an altogether new interpretaion so as to seek reconciliation with Hindu society. A *sloka* in *Hathyog-Pradipka* stating that beef should be eaten is followed by another explaining that here the word *go* means tongue and not cow and eating its flesh merely means the yogic practice of *Brahmarandhera* requiring the



pushing of one's tongue into the throat making its back completely touch the palate.

The sects which associated themselves with the Nathpanth or merged into it, generally maintained their old beliefs, modified to omit practices offensive to Hindu religion. It seems that during this period the worship of cow became the *sine qua non* of a sect's acceptance into the Hindu society.

Buddhism, however, continued to exercise much influence and to maintain its independent existence in the east of India even after the coming of Muslims. Mohamed Bakhtiar, the commander of Kutub-uddin, who invaded Bihar is reported to have destroyed the Buddhist Viharas and libraries at Nalanda and Udanpuri. Sarnath also seems to have perished at the hands of some vandals during the same period. Gorakhnath himself is stated to be a Buddhist in the beginning.<sup>9</sup> According to Chaintanyacharitamrit, when Bengali saint Chaitanyadeva (died 1533 A.D.) went to South India, he had long discussions with Buddhist monks at Arcot. Reference is also available about one Rangalraj Raja who built a Buddhist temple at Gaya in 1450 A.D. After the Buddhist *Sanghas* had been destroyed, *Niranjans*, *Sidhas*, *Dharampanthis* and similar semi-Buddhist sects continued to survive for a long time.

All these sects used the languages of the people or some mixture of them for their literary purpose and metres too were borrowed from the folk heritage. The *dohas*, *padas*, *chaupais* and *ulbansis* of the Nathpanthis and their unorthodox content provided the main inspiration for the *nirgun bhakti* movement. Even their devotion to the guru

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9. Cf. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi : *Madhyakaleen Dharam Sadhana*.



instead of some deity, for attaining the Sat-Guru - the True One, through Sat Nam the True Name- was borrowed from the Naths and Sidhs, though interpreted differently by different *nirgun* saints. The synthesis of non-Hindu beliefs with some of the Hindu ones provided the main spiritual content of this movement.

Trade was fast emerging from the setback it had suffered in Northern India as a result of the Muslim invasions. Towns which were later to play a vital part in the growth of mercantile economy and in bringing the various tribes and nationalities into intimate contact with one another, had again begun to reappear after their destruction at the hands of Mahmud Gaznavi, Timur and others. In the whole territory from Kandhar to Calcutta and from Himalayas southwards to Kutch, there is hardly mention of two dozen towns of any size.<sup>10</sup> Only a millennium earlier the whole of Northern India was full of towns and centres of industry. Magasthenes referring to the towns during the Mauryan period mentioned "that the number is so great that it cannot be stated with precision." Earlier Strabo, the geographer of Alexander's campaign affirmed that in the territory between Jhelum and Beas there were as many as 500 towns, which account is corroborated by Panini's *Astadhyayi*.<sup>11</sup>

The growth of feudalism reduced these towns in number and importance but they suffered mainly at the hands of invaders from the north-west. Al-Beruni referring to Mahmud's seventeen invasions during the eleventh century stated : "Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country and performed those wonderful exploits by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all the directions and

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10. Cf. al-Beruni—*Kitab-ul-Hind*.

11. Cf. Vasudev Saran Aggarwala : *India as known to Panini*.



like a tale of old in the mouths of the people." Timur two centuries later marched to Delhi similarly leaving behind heaps of corpses and burning towns and villages. Over a lakh of persons were killed by him at Delhi alone and the city was looted and ransacked continuously for five days. Guru Nanak in his *Babar Bani* mentioned how with the coming of Babar, "women became widows and men shelterless." He himself was put in prison by his army. The repeated destruction of towns was calamitous, more so, because it was combined with decay or uprooting of governmental organisations which alone could maintain the irrigation systems and keep the ravages of faulty tropical agriculture in check. A higher form of feudalism could emerge only on the basis of abundant, fertile and well-worked land. In Northern India agriculture regressed quite often. This is indicated by the cheapness and the large number of slaves, during this period—slavery was almost unknown during feudalism in Europe. Under Firoz Tugluk a slave would cost eight *tankas* while a goat would cost as much as three. He encouraged the nobles of the realm to send slaves as annual tribute, for which a corresponding remission was made to them from the treasury. In Delhi alone their number rose from 50,000 under Ala-ud-Din, to 2,00,000 under Firoze. About 12,000 of these were craftsmen and masons. Many of these slaves worked in royal factories for the manufacture of all kinds of goods.<sup>12</sup>

During this period useful sciences made little progress. Unlike the alchemy of Europe, Indian *rasayana*, generally called *sidh-rasayana*, was purely magical as would appear from Al-Beruni's description.<sup>13</sup> There was no indication of

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12. Mohd. Ashraf : Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan.

13. Cf. Kitab-ul-Hind.



feudal society moving to a higher stage where mercantile economy could begin to lessen the rigidity of feudal life. Only architecture could make significant advance under these circumstances and India had some of the finest masons in the world at that time. Amir Khusro proudly claimed that the masons and stone cutters of Delhi were superior to their fellow craftsmen of the Muslim world. Timur carried thousands of masons and artisans to Samarkand. This development of architecture was, however, merely a technical achievement and the result of discovering a series of solutions to practical difficulties. It did not bring about any advance in scientific knowledge—the theory of vault etc., was a later discovery.

The *Bhakti* movement arose in an era when money economy in India, particularly in the north was in its early stages and still rural in nature. Built around self-sufficient village communities as this economy was, production was primarily for local consumption. Industry and trade were confined to handicrafts based primarily upon the exploitation of agricultural produce. Even the few large-scale industries which were carried on in a small number of localized areas, situated as a rule on the banks of rivers, showed the high level of specialization that could be achieved by generations of skillful effort, rather than any advance in science or technology. Methods of agriculture and transport had hardly made any advance during the preceding centuries. The ordinary villager had continued to plough with the shallow wooden plough and travel in the slow-moving bullock cart. The broad rivers were unbridged and the countryside was wilder and more thickly-forested than it is today. Herds of wild elephants, tigers etc. now extinct in the northern plains roamed about throughout the length and breadth of the land, increasing further the isolation of tribal communities and newly-rising nationalities. Development of trade and money-commodity relations were as much thwarted by lack of



sufficient surplus in agricultural produce as by hazards and the slowness of transport. It, therefore, does not seem to be possible that the languages of tribes and nationalities could have coalesced into national languages during this period. This required the development of mercantile economy, the growth of mutually-linked, if not unified markets over wide areas and the emergence of centralized mercantile or semi-mercantile states that could promote this and reverse the process of feudal isolation. The emergence of such conditions came about under the Mughals when the mixing up of the languages of tribes and nationalities took a final shape. Their extent and nature will be examined later.

The above would show that the belief almost universally held that Modern Hindi and some other languages of Northern India had their birth in the beginning of this millennium is not scientifically tenable. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji states categorically that "seven centuries were taken in the evolution of Hindustani—roughly from 1100 to 1800 A.D."<sup>14</sup> Dr. Sampurnanand too believes that the "the Hindi of today is the Hindi that has evolved down the centuries from the various Prakrits which began to take literary shape in Northern India."<sup>15</sup> Agreeing completely with the above, Mr. Sajaad Zaheer traces Hindustani to "the Apabhramsa form of Prakrit language prevalent in Northern and Central India at the time of the Turkish invasion of India in the 11th century A.D."<sup>16</sup>

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14. S.K.Chatterji : Indo-Aryan and Hindi.

15. Cf. Speech reported in daily Statesman. New Delhi, March 28, 1951

16. Sajaad Zaheer : Problem of Urdu-Hindi-Hindustani, Marxist Miscellany Vol. 4 : Peoples Publishing House, Bombay.



The mere presence in Apabhramsas of grammatical forms akin to Modern Hindi does not by itself show that the latter originated from the former. The breaking down of inflexion and their replacement by post-positions as in modern languages are likely to have made their appearance even before the Apabhramsas flowered as literary languages. The Apabhramsas had necessarily to borrow some of these grammatical forms just as they adopted some dead ones also. Later the *bhakti kavya* and the *Rasos* too drew upon these grammatical forms of the colloquial speeches of those times, the former more than the later, because it was nearer the people. These colloquial speeches, however, still existed as the languages of tribes and nascent nationalities. It was not during the Early Hindi period but in the Middle Hindi period that the colloquial speeches merged and grew into the languages we have today.

Early Hindi, as the first of the three periods of Hindi language and literature is called, is not a uniform language. It exists in several varieties, some of which are completely unconnected with the others. These are generally grouped into two 'forms' or styles, *dingal* of the *Virgatha-Kal* and *bhakti-kavya* of the *Bhakti-Kal*. Each one of these two styles is quite separate from and unconnected with the other and is in itself a loose common name for several varieties and shades.

The *dingal* is the style in which heroic ballads of those times were written by bards and minstrels of Rajasthan who either lived in the court of some Rajput prince or wandered from one feudal principality to the other, singing their ballads consisting of time-worn court tales of chivalry of the knights of yore slaying enemies by thousands and also newly-composed songs in praise of the prince they were then attending on. *Charan* was the name of the tribe of these bards or *bhats* as they were called and the heroic ballads



sung by them were called *charan-kavya*. The name *dingal* meaning low or deformed verses was given to this poetry as opposed to *pingal* meaning verses which followed the classical rules of prosody.

The balladeers or minstrels during the feudal times were generally of two types. One class of these minstrels catered to the spiritual needs of the common people. Such a minstrel was their entertainer and source of information. Liked and welcomed by the common people and distrusted and frowned upon by the temporal and religious authorities, he sang of the many-sided experiences of the peoples' common life. Drawing upon their own songs of love and labour, he chiselled and polished them with the craftsmanship learned through the effort of many generations. He was a jester who sometimes made them laugh over their oppression and at others angry against it. Bringing to a rich life those very imageries, metres and tunes which had been borrowed from their inexhaustible heritage of memories, he and his songs were a flesh of their flesh. This class of *dingal* or *charan-kavya* which was mainly in the colloquial speeches of the tribes or nationalities remains unnoticed and uncollected by the historians of Hindi. Some of its elements are surely yet available in the common literature of Rajasthan.

The minstrels of the other class were *bhats* or bards who addressed their ballads to the service of the feudal chieftains and their retainers. Their language generally mixed and non-colloquial differed from court to court. The same heroic tales and ballads were changed to include words of the language and names of living and dead heroes of the clan, tribe or principality whose fortunes were on the rise. Wandering from court to court these bards had often to evolve a mixed language more or less intelligible at the various courts. Quite often when the fortunes of a barony rose its spoken language also got the upper hand and became



the dominant element in the mixed language of the ballads sung by these bards.

In Germany there was the Chancery language of more or less the same period which was of a similarly mixed nature. The ancestry of modern German is not claimed to this Chancery language. It also differed from Alemannic, Frankish, Bavarian and Swabian, the languages of the feudal principalities which won prominence one after the other in the preceding centuries. It was an artificial language made up of the mixture of commonly understood words of all these languages with the minimum possible grammatical elements so as to keep out dialectal peculiarities. The *dingal* language of the *Rasos* was a similarly mixed language.

The greatest work of this *dingal* 'style' of Hindi which is also believed to be the earliest extant work of the Hindi language is Chanda Baradai's "Prithviraj Rasau". The artificial and mixed character of its language has been recognized by all scholars and historians of Hindi. In this connection, Dr. S.K. Chatterji significantly remarks : "As it is, the language of the Rasau is not living dialect - It is not the spoken language of any period or province. It is an artificial literary dialect, with forms from a whole host of speeches covering a number of centuries and several thousands of square miles. The main elements are Western Apabhramsa, with Early Western Hindi and Rajasthani dialects, and Early Panjabi features here and there. A mixed dialect of this type became gradually current after 1200 A.D. in Rajput poetry and was known as Pingala or Pingal. But this mixed dialect of Rajput bardic poetry was a specialized speech—a class dialect, understood only by the initiated : it was not a language of the masses."<sup>17</sup> Almost all

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17. S.K. Chatterji : Indo-Aryan and Hindi.



scholars on the subject have expressed their agreement with the above views. There is also a unanimity of opinion about its containing many interpolations of subsequent periods. Dr. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi believes that "the form in which it is available today is not original and has got enormously modified and tempered with."<sup>18</sup> Despite that, surprisingly enough, this language continues to be regarded as the earliest extant example of the Hindi language.

This mixing up of languages in the Rasau is not due to later interpolations, nor is there anything unusual in it. Another similar publication brought out by the Kashi Nagri Pracharni Sabha is *Parmal Raso* "a work similar in nature to Prithiviraj Rasau and having a similarly mixed language."<sup>19</sup>

In the feudal society, over and above the divided peasantry stood the greater landlord, the baron and sometimes the king. Similarly over and above the babel of dialects and colloquial speeches, the ruling feudal and priestly classes evolved an artificial super-tongue, so necessary for serving the interests of their class. Different historical and material circumstances gave birth to different languages in different countries. *Dingal* was one such language and no amount of effort can prove that it was the early stage of the Hindi of today.

The 'form' or style of Early Hindi variously called—*Hindvi*, *Sadh-bhasha*, *Sant-vani*, *Bhakti-kavya* etc.—is in fact not one uniform language but is a common term, loosely used, for several varieties and shades of the languages of Northern India during those times. This 'form' arose differently from *dingal*, covered a wider area and was nearer to the speech of the people. This language of *bhakti* revival

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18. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi : Hindi Sahitya ki Bboomika.

19. Ibid.



arose in the era of early mercantile economy when money-commodity relations had not yet become powerful enough to make appreciable breaches in the rigidity of feudal life, which in India was more ossified than elsewhere, due primarily to the incrustation of classes into castes. Only after a stable merchant community had come to birth with national as distinct from local or sectional interests would the traders and merchants begin to move about freely and in large numbers from one linguistic area to the other. At that particular period in Indian history, the only persons who moved about from place to place in sufficient numbers were the pilgrims and *sadhus*. While moving about from one pilgrim centre to the other, the *sadhus* particularly, had perforce, to evolve some sort of common vocabulary and terminology for discussion among themselves and also for preaching their beliefs. They often strove to compose their *bhajan*s, *dohas* etc., in a language intelligible to the largest group of communities among which they moved about. Sometimes like Guru Nanak they composed in several dialects or, as in the earlier part of *japji*, wrote *bhajan*s using widely understood words and phrases only, doing away mostly with grammatical structure. However, a majority of them generally dropped the unintelligible elements of their own language or dialect and adopted familiar elements of others. Quite frequently they modified their songs to meet the needs of every area they visited and equally often this was done by their disciples in that area. In view of that there is not much substance in Sri Uday Narain Tiwari's complaint that the songs of Kabir were rendered into Panjabi by the Sikh Guru while including them in the *Adi Granth*.<sup>20</sup>

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20. Uday Narain Tiwari : broadcast talk on "Bhojpuri" included in *Hindi Ki Pradeshic Bashaen*—Publications Division : Delhi.



It is virtually impossible to say with certainty about any saint poet of that period that he composed in the language which has come down to us.

It is not, therefore, surprising that Early Hindi exists in several varieties and styles and covers areas as far-flung as Panjab, Bihar and Maharashtra. It is also significant that the writings of those saints are claimed as much by the languages of the respective regions as by Hindi. The Sikh scripture, *Adi Granth*, gives the devotional songs of over a dozen of these saints and from these one can obtain some idea of how distinct and in many ways independent these varieties of Early Hindi are. The varied nature of these writings is also evidenced by the several *Bhagat-malas*—anthologies of saint-poets—prepared during those times.

Two of the greatest bhakti-poets were Kabir and Nanak and their languages, as these are available today, are also nearest to *Khari Boli*. The non-colloquial nature of these languages has generally been recognised. Sri Ram Chandra Shukla discussing the language of Kabir remarks : "The collection of Kabir's writings is known under the name *Bijak* and it has been divided into three parts—*Rameni*, *Sabd* and *Sakhi*... Their language is mixed. It contains a combination of *Khari-boli*, *Avadhi*, *Purbi* (Bihar) and many related dialects. Here and there elements of *Braj-bhasha* are also traceable but very few."<sup>21</sup> Incidentally, Kabir describes his mother-tongue as '*Purbi*'. The mixed nature of the language of Guru Nanak's writings has already been referred to.

Mere etymological evidence can sometimes be misleading and the nearness of some grammatical forms of

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21. Ram Chandra Shukla : *Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas*, Indian Press, Allahabad.



the Early Hindi period to those available in our modern language has tended to misguide Indian philologists into believing that the *bhakti-kavya* marks the beginning of the new period instead of being the last phase of the old one. The literary languages of the feudal period are prone to retain dead and semi-dead forms so much so that words in their Apabhramsa form are available even in the writings of Tulsi and Sur. Languages grow and change so slowly and over such a vast period of time that the forms of words and grammar akin to the modern languages possibly existed in the colloquial speeches even a few centuries prior to the Early Hindi Period. The presence of these forms in Early Hindi does not by itself prove that a common colloquial language for a territory as vast as the one now called Hindi or Hindustani area, had then begun to take shape. The non-colloquial languages have necessarily to borrow the grammatical forms of the colloquial speeches because they cannot have an independent grammatical system of their own.

The presence of Khari Boli elements in these languages of the *Nirgun* saints can be understood only if we can appreciate the intimate link they had with the previous period. The Nirgun saints were the direct inheritors of the traditions of *Nathpanth*, the founder-saints of which sect were from an area where *Khari Boli* and *Eastern Panjabi* were prevalent as colloquial speeches. In the *Mathas*, *Akharas* and *Asthanas* of *Nathpanth*, a mixed artificial language, the predominant elements of which were Khari Boli and Eastern Panjabi, began to be used by these saints and their followers for discussions and for mutual communication. As these *akharas* and *asthanas* spread from Khari Boli and neighbouring areas to other part of India, this language began to vary from area to area but Khari Boli elements continued generally, to predominate and to provide the main grammatical stem.

In the Middle Ages all forms of ideology and struggle



expressed themselves through religion. As all social and political movements had necessarily to appear in a theological frame-work, the masses also had to put forward their interests in a religious guise. Accordingly religion not only found expression in forms which sanctioned oppression but also in those which protested against it. We have seen earlier that, throughout, some religious forms continued to be used as a weapon of struggle against oppression and against all those religious opinions which sanctioned it. In the early Middle Ages, the dominant form was renunciation and asceticism. In India the *Yogic* beliefs, which varied from *raj-yoga* to *hath-yoga*, formed as much a part of the Vedic systems as that of the non-Hindu creeds, serving in one case the purpose of abject surrender to the system and in the other of protest against its injustices. The common people developed the latter form in their own unsophisticated ways deriving its richness and vigour from the simple and rough-hewn beliefs and heritage of their own. Sometimes these *yogic* and *hath-yogic* beliefs acquired such a vigorous element of protest that anarchist sects like *Vam-maragis* and tantrics went to the extent of preaching that "all that is *dharama* for brahmins is *adharama* for us and all that is *adharama* for brahmins is *dharama* for us." The forms of protest employed by these *Sahjyanis*, *Vajaryanis*, *Marmis*, *Kapalakas*, *Charvaks*, *Aghoras*, etc., were inherited by the *nirgun* saints. Their very conception of *nirgun* can be traced to the *nirgun Siva* of *Kapalakas* and others of the first millennium A.D. How intimate and unbroken this inheritance has been will be borne out by the fact that Kabir's *ultbansis* were adopted from *Nathpanthis*, *yogis*, *Sahjyanis* and *Vajaryanis* not only in form but sometimes also in content. The *Nathpanthis*, *Sahjyanis* etc. in turn derived these from *Vibhashakas* and some other Buddhist sects of half a millennium earlier, who got this name because they made use of *vibhasha* or 'gibberish'. They were like a similar group of despised minstrels and "nameless vagabonds" in Europe who used a language called *trobar clus*—literally to compose obscurely.



The mixed languages of *nirgun* saints have their parallel in Europe and also in other parts of India. Referring to the language of the lyrics of the 'wandering scholars' of Europe during almost the same period, Hellen Waddell observes that to study it properly "demands a knowledge of five vernaculars at their thorniest transition—Provençal, Middle German, Italian, Old French, Anglo Norman as well as Middle English."<sup>22</sup> She has also pointed out that "the loveliest of all rhymes was shaping itself in three languages to its last and absolute perfection", a phenomenon observed in India with some of the songs of Kabir and other *bhakti* poets. Similar languages were current in other parts of India during those times. *Padas* was the 'style' current in Bengal and Bihar among saint-poets. The Sahjyanis called their language *sandhya-bhasha* and those who have made a detailed study of this language have expressed the opinion that because of its mixed character the language could only be half understood and half-guessed.

Many Sidh *ultabansis* etc., appear later under the names of *bhakti* poets with minor alterations made necessary by time, place and individual temperament. This language becomes still more unreliable for philological formulation as a result of verbal alterations by the followers of these saints, many of them writing not in their own name but in the name of the founder of the sect. Dr. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi has pointed out that Kabir and other *bhakti* saints not only borrowed the literary and metric traditions from *Nathapanthis*, *Sehjyanis*, etc., but "adopted word for word the couplets and dohas"<sup>23</sup> and also that "the same couplet would sometimes be ascribed to kabir and at others to Gorakhnath, Dadu or Raidas."<sup>24</sup>

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22. Hellen Waddell : *Wandering Scholars*, Penguin Books, London.

23. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi : *Hindi Sahitya ki Bhoomika*.

24. Ibid. Also Cf. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi : *Nath Sampradaya*.



This confusion becomes more confounding as a result of the general practice of lumping together all the *nirgun* and *sagun* saints from the 12th to the 16th century within the *bhakti* movement of the Early and Middle Hindi periods. Their writings do not have any uniform grammatical stem and are also very varied, as these inevitably reflect the changes in the fortunes of the various contending classes during those five momentous centuries. The three forms of religious opinions during the feudal period have already been mentioned—the first, of ascetic aloofness and of detesting or otherwise running away from social evils, the second of accepting them tamely but ignoring them and third of protesting against some or most of the social evils and of agitating for their reform. The second form of religious opinion, represented by *Pancharatra*, *Bhagawata* and other sects had its best representative in Sur Das in the sixteenth century. The third form of opinion which existed mainly among non-Vedic and non-Hindu sects was inherited by Kabir and other *nirgun* saints. After Kabir another form of religious opinion acquired popularity. This fourth form was that of partly accepting and partly decrying rather of both accepting and criticising social evils and believing them to constitute the squalid foundation on which the life of the spirit must arise. It had in Tulsi its best representative. This would show that even among the *sagun* saints, the writings were inspired by different ideologies. It is not possible to understand the nature of the languages they wrote in and the contribution they made to the evolution of national languages in Northern India without properly appreciating these differences.



## THE MIDDLE HINDI PERIOD

The second style of Hindi called the "Middle Hindi," prevalent from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, is represented as a golden period of its literature. Unlike the Early Hindi period where, in several varieties of mixed languages, one could trace somewhat dominant position of *Khari Boli* elements, the Middle Hindi period consists of literatures in many languages without any linguistic Unity. These literatures consist mainly of *Riti Kal* (in *Braj Bhasha* and *Bundeli*), *Krishna-bhakti-dhara* (in *Braj*—*Bhasha* and *Rajasthani*) and *Ram-bhakti-dhara* (in *Avadhi* and *Bhojpuri*). These languages—*Braj Bhasha*, *Avadhi*, *Rajasthani* etc., are today regarded as 'dialects' of Hindi. National languages arose on the basis of the grammatical system of the language of one nationality or tribe and those of others forming the 'nation' concentrating or merging themselves into it. This grammatical system and the basic stock of words got continuously strengthened, enriched and extended and thus standard languages emerged over areas covering several dialects and smaller languages. In case of Hindi, however, it is put forward that the grammatical stem of *Khari Boli* which was acquired during the Early Hindi period was given up in favour of those of *Braj Bhasha*, *Avadhi* etc., in the Middle Hindi period. The phenomenon of a 'national' language acquiring a grammatical stem and later, instead of strengthening it, surrendering it for some centuries is unusual in linguistic history. No explanation is ever given for this by the historians of the Hindi language. The flowering of



Avadhi, Braj Bhasha and other languages during this period would itself show that the earlier period, when Khari-Boli-Hindi is believed to embrace all these areas, did not mark the beginning of any colloquial speech over such a vast area. Tulsi Dass called his language *bhasha* and meant only Avadhi by it. This was the period when these colloquial *bhashas* covering areas as large as Brajbhoomi, Avadh, Mithila, Magadha, Rajasthan, etc., tended to emerge out of the mixing up of dialects and smaller colloquial speeches of tribes, feudal principalities and nationalities.

All the spoken languages and dialects in the far flung parts of Northern, Central and Western India now called the Hindi area, could not grow into one colloquial language but could develop only on a smaller scale within regions which now constitute the *pradeshik bhashas* or regional languages of his area. Before the reasons for this can be explained, it appears necessary to discuss the factors, different in different countries, which bring about the evolution of national languages. The material and spiritual conditions existing in Northern India at that time will also have to be examined to find out the extent and the manner in which those factors exercised their influence in India.

It has been seen in the previous chapters that colloquial tribal languages have been indisputably there ever since these communities came to settle in their present territories. The languages spoken by the people did not, however, remain unchanged. Their growth, simplification and enrichment went on at varying paces side by side with the enrichment in quality, if not in quantity, of the material equipment of the society. Such material conditions did not, however, exist as could enable them to exhibit any tendency towards general unity. The type of feudalism we have had in this country is characterized by a stagnant condition of society. This does not mean that social life did not undergo convulsions or the modes of production remained absolutely changeless.



Whenever new techniques raised the low productivity of forced peasant labour, the tribes and their languages tended to draw nearer but this process was often arrested or reversed by foreign invasions, immigrations and internecine feudal conflicts. Whenever tools became less efficient, languages also deteriorated correspondingly. Slow in the invention of new tools, because of the inherent defects in Indian feudalism, but very dexterous in the perfecting of old ones, the Indian people did continue to move slowly forward, less haltingly in areas which were not within the immediate reach of invaders. Though the internal conflict within that serf-like society never became intense enough to make any forward leap possible, the mixing up of tribes and clans into nationalities went on within areas which had some geographical and historical unity and within which community of psychological make up had come to exist. The effect of these internal integrative forces became evident in the feudal principalities which developed between the ninth and the twelfth century. The Chandellas of Jeja Bhukti (Bundelkhand), Kalacuri principalities of Gorakhpur (Kehala), Chhota Nagpur (Dehala) and Chhatisgarh (Tummana), Kachhapaghatas (Kachhwahas) of Eastern Rajputana, Paramaras of Malva, Caulukyias of Anahila Pataka (Kathiawar), Cahamanas (Chauhanas) of North-Western Rajputana, Guhillas of Southern Rajputana, Tomars of Hariana, Gahadavalas of Eastern Avadh, Palas of Southern Bihar, Senas of South-Western Bengal and other similar kingdoms<sup>1</sup> which arose during that period emphasize the fact that most of the ancient tribes mentioned in the Mahabharata, the Puranas and the Buddhist works and by Panini and Kalidasa had then begun to come together,

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1. Cf. H.C. Roy : The Dynastic History of Northern India—Early Medieval Period, Volumes 1&2



forming nascent nationalities.<sup>2</sup>

The next stage in the development of languages i.e. the mixing up and concentration of languages of nationalities into national languages could come about only when the small marts had merged into a single national market. This could happen only when the mercantile community developed a national as distinct from a local or sectional outlook, thereby ending feudal isolation and tearing asunder the rigidity of feudal life.

In India during the centuries which marked the establishment of the Mughal empire, the mercantile community acquired a new stability and vitality. The Lodhis had made the roads safer and better and Sher Shah reformed the monetary system. The importance which the trading community had begun to acquire by the time of Akbar is evidenced by the significant position which Todar Mal occupied at his court.

Earlier Muslim invaders came merely to loot and plunder. They did immense damage to productive resources. The fertilizing effect of the new invention which they brought with them could be felt only after the Muslim Kingdoms firmly established themselves in India. The set-back which agriculture had received as a result of the neglect of irrigation and public works, consequent on periodic unstable

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2. S.A. Dange observes in *Notes on Medieval Marathi Literature* : "The birth of the elements of stable nationalities should be looked into between 600 B.C. and 200 B.C." (Indian Literature No.2 of 1952). Referring to those times Rhys Davids, however, states: "The country was immense. Compared with its wide expanse, the tribes and clans were few ; often separated from one another by broad rivers and impenetrable forests, there must have been ample opportunity for independent growth." (Buddhist India).



governments, was made good by the building of tanks and wells by individuals which had now been enjoined as a religious duty on their part. The pulleys, springs and levers developed in the *Manjnik*,<sup>3</sup> (the mechanical apparatus used by the Muslim invaders, before the invention of gun powder, for storming forts) helped in improving the mechanism of irrigation and industry. The use of Persian wheel in farm wells became widespread. The horse-collar and the horse-shoe came to India and horses began to be used increasingly for transport. Roads linked the various marketing centres which developed fast as agricultural economy began to yield surpluses large enough to form the basis of handicrafts and of an industry based primarily upon the exploitation of agricultural produce. Thus the age-long isolation of the colloquial speeches had begun to grow less even before Sher Shah and Akbar.

Under Akbar we have what can be called an "empire of merchants and landlords." Akbar took an active interest in mercantile activities. V.A. Smith has emphasized that "Akbar himself was a trader and did not disdain to earn commercial profits."<sup>4</sup> The revenue and administrative system inherited from the Sur kings was improved. A uniform system of currency was introduced throughout the realm and mint was brought under royal control. Feudal relations received a severe set-back by Akbar's new system of making cash payments to his *mansabdars* instead of payments through allotment of jagirs.

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3. Prof. Mahmud Khan Sherwani who has made a detailed study of this subject has failed to find any clear account of the mechanism of *Manjnik* among Muslim chroniclers (c.f. Prithvi Raj Raso—Anjuman-e-Taraqi-e-Urdu). There is, however, no doubt that *Manjnik* was similar to, though somewhat more elaborate than, the European catapult.

4. V.A. Smith : Akbar, The Great Mughal,



Shahjahan monopolized trade in indigo and saltpetre. Nur Jahan dabbled in embroidered-cloth trade and her father and other courtiers and princes were also traders. Pieces of cotton cloth exported to England from Agra increased from 2,823 in 1638-39 to 23,550 in 1640-41. Agra, previously a centre of saltpetre, stone quarries and iron, developed into a great market of cotton trade. The population of Agra increased to six lakhs in 1640 A. D. after Akbar and Jehangir developed this town and the neighbouring Fatehpuri as capital. It was perhaps the largest city in the world at that time.

The question now arises why national languages could during this period, sprout only on a smaller scale and why the process of their mixing up did not include the whole of the territory now called Hindi region and also Panjab, Deccan and Gujarat which were then intimately linked with this area through trade. Even after the cotton trade with Britain and other countries shifted from Gujarat to Agra, it continued to be through the Gujarat ports. Lahore had developed into great centre of horse trade and of a famous shawl industry. It was now on the trade route to Central and Western Asia, which previously passed through Multan or Sialkot. Thus it had developed into a city as prosperous and as popular as Agra. Jehangir and Nur Jehan chose to have their mausoleums there and it was the home of powerful Mughal princes. It then had most intimate contacts with the trading centres of Agra and Delhi.

The mercantile economy, in the times of Akbar, was at a much lower technical level than in Europe. European travellers during the Mughal period "refer to the badness of roads which were atrocious even by low Western standards of the time."<sup>5</sup> The rivers were broad and without bridges

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5. A.L.Basham : The Wonder that was India. London, 1954.



and "we have it on record that the Mughal armies found the forests of Orcha so thick that they had to undertake a special operation to clear the way."<sup>6</sup> The new prosperity did not last long and received a serious set-back soon after it came into its own. *Mansabdars* again became Jagirdars and to the feuds between the princes and the wars against the resurgent nationalities were added the attempts by these *Mansabdars* to acquire more and more power. Land revenue which was one sixth of produce before and under the early Muslim kings, became one-third under Akbar and one-half under the later Mughals. This became a dead weight on agriculture which suffered most from chronic wars and military marches. The *karkhanas* which were centres of prosperity during the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century deteriorated as tyrannical officials tried to have every thing at cheap rates and never paid for anything adequately. Village industries died out altogether and in many respects India went back to an economic level lower than the one it started with under Akbar. Bernier dwells at length upon the decline of arts and crafts and the unsettled condition of the country which was inimical to all trade and commerce. Referring to it Prof. J.N. Sarkar observes : "Thus ensued a great economic impoverishment of India—not only a decrease of the 'national stock' but also a rapid lowering of mechanical skill and standards of civilization—a disappearance of art and culture over wide tracts of the country."<sup>7</sup> The merchant had perforce to conceal his wealth instead of investing it in commerce for fear of being deprived of it by the local governor or *faujdar*. As highways lost their security, large-scale commercial activities ceased altogether. Famines occurred frequently and their

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6. K.M.Panikkar : Geographical Factors in Indian History.

7. J.N.Sarkar : History of Aurangzeb,



effect on trade was also disastrous. Indigo, one of the principal articles of export, became scarce. Price of cotton went up and that of gold fell.

Most of the technical achievements which effected the birth of capitalist relations out of the womb of Western European feudal society were absent in India. Uninterrupted growth of mercantile economy over several centuries, stimulated by an ever rising technological level was necessary, before an advance could be made towards Renaissance and onwards to the Industrial Revolution. Despite that, the countries of Western Europe, formerly covered by Latin and having an area and population much less than Northern India, did not develop one common language and one single nationhood, but over a dozen languages and nations.

The economic development in Europe took place in three stages—small commodity production depending mainly on handicrafts or peasant trades, capitalist manufacture and large scale factory production. In India mercantile economy did not develop beyond the first stage and here also the growth of state-owned *karkhanas*, run through semi-slave labour, undermined the influence of trade guilds. It is wrong to say that India, during the Mughal period, developed a bourgeoisie either on a small or a national scale. Mughal absolutism left untouched the ancient relations which had become solidified into Indian feudalism i.e., village self-sufficiency, caste system, virtual slavery of the lower castes, etc.

An equally far-reaching shortcoming was that Mughal despotism was not national in character. Akbar, the most Indian of the Mughal rulers, introduced Persian as the language of administration.<sup>8</sup> Significantly enough, after his victory at Panipat he sent Hemu's head for display at Kabul.

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8. K.M. Panikkar : The Moghul Emperors in India became



The Mughal state was not a national state like the ones which grew up in Western Europe, but multi-national somewhat like the Turkish Empire in Eastern Europe of more or less the same period, and based upon the merciless suppression of nationalities and nations living within it. Discussing the deadly effect this had on the growth of national languages. Prof. W.R.Lockwood states : "Byzantium fell in 1453, but the majority of the Greeks had been obliged to acknowledge the Ottoman overlord before this. Thus while Italy and France were evolving towards nationhood in the modern sense, Greece was languishing in Turkish captivity, her advance to nationhood effectively restrained by political subjugation."<sup>9</sup>

Another reason why a common language could not grow for the whole of the Hindi region was that factors which contributed to the evolution of national languages and nations in other countries did not operate here on a scale large enough for the purpose. London, Paris and other capital cities in Western Europe contributed towards the unification of smaller languages and dialects by sucking in a mass of people not only from their immediate environments but also from more remote districts. In these towns immigrants from different parts of the country got their dialects rubbed down in mutual intercourse with one another. Consequently, the population of these great towns began to talk in a manner which one would not expect from its geographical situation. Otto Jeperson showed from the census of 1890 that the majority of the inhabitants of Copenhagen had not been

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the embodiment of Persian culture and celebrated Nauroz with traditional festivities and popularized Persian techniques in art" (Geographical Factors In Indian History)

9. Cf. "Language and the Rise of Nations"—Science and Society Vol. XVIII No.3, Summer 1954.



born in or near Copenhagen<sup>10</sup> These capital towns, therefore acted as a crucible where the languages of nationalities and tribes historically, emotionally and psychologically moving towards a common national life, underwent concentration and fusion. Other contributory factors were political unity common military service, popular religious and other festivals and dramas—the commonly understood German of the stage had even a name—*Buhneudeutsch*. In Germany, as in some other countries where commercial prosperity came late, religion played a very important part. The language used by Luther was not the local dialect of a district. It was based upon the court and official languages of principal kingdoms of Central and Southern Germany made up of Swabian, Austrian and other dialectal elements. To this Bible of Luther, the upheavals of Reformation and political revolution gave a new fillip. Armed with the new art of printing it penetrated all parts of the land and all classes of the people. In Russia also, important part was played in the consolidation of Russian language and culture by the transfer of the seat of the Russian Metropolis to Moscow.

In the heyday of commercial prosperity under the Mughals, Delhi was not their capital. No wonder that the most popular Indian language during the time of Akbar and Jehangir was not Khari-Boli Hindi but Braj Bhasha, the language of the neighbourhood of Agra.<sup>11</sup> The large population of Delhi under Akbar considered by Marx<sup>12</sup> as

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10. Otto Jespersen : "Fonetik."

11. S.K.Chatterji states in Indo-Aryan and Hindi : "Akbar composed distichs in *Braj-Bhakha*, and if any Indo-Aryan language could be labelled as *Badshahi Boli* in Northern India, it was certainly *Braj Bhakha*."

12. Karl Marx : Chronological Notes on the History of India.



the largest city of the world at that time continued to dwindle from century to century as the city attracted fewer and fewer traders with the fading away of its short lived commercial prosperity under Akbar and Shahjehan. The city never recovered from the deadly blows it received at the hands of Nadir Shah (1739) and during the Mutiny (1857) so much so that on the eve of the Second World War in 1939, it was a small town with less than two lakhs inhabitants speaking primarily a style of Khari Boli nearer to Urdu than to Modern Hindi.

The belief that the language of the capital city by itself wipes out the languages of other areas superseding them and thus becoming a national language is erroneous. It is not supported by any evidence whatsoever. The peoples as tenacious as those living in India and with a culture as imperishable as theirs would never have allowed their languages to be wiped out without themselves suffering extinction. The single common language which gets formed in the crucible of capital cities is the result of the concentration of dialects around the stem provided by the grammatical system and the basic vocabulary of one or two of them. This language is the highest form, to the making of which smaller languages and dialects as lower forms contribute their share. Delhi did not develop into a melting pot for such a fusion of languages of Northern India, with the result that Sur Das and Tulsi did not have any commonly evolved colloquial language for this whole area to serve as their medium. They had, therefore, to write in languages which did not possess any grammatical elements of Khari Boli. *Sur Sagar* and *Ram Charit Manas* could not, therefore, perform a function in the evolution of a common language for the whole of Northern India, as was done by Luther's Bible.

Another significant reason, which is likely to have



prevented the languages of nationalities and tribes living in the Hindi region from merging into a single language, is that the people of this vast area have seldom tended to evolve a stable community of psychological make-up manifested in emotional and cultural homogeneity. This becomes clear if we look at the cultural and historical past of the various peoples who have been living in the Hindi region all through the centuries.

No common history of the peoples of the Hindi region or even of Uttar Pradesh as such, is so far available and one has to scan diverse materials to get a picture of these ancient peoples march through the last two or three millenniums. The Hindi speaking 'nation' which has built up the largest industrial structure in the colonial world and has thrown up the most powerful bourgeoisie in Asia outside Japan is, strangely enough, not conscious of its history at all. Even after the inroads of capitalist relations into our social polity for over a century, if you tell a person belonging to the Hindi region that his nationality is 'Hindustani' in this particular sense, it might not be easy to make him understand what this really means.

Confining ourselves to Uttar Pradesh is likely to help in bringing the problem into proper focus. The U. P. Legislature trying to find a name for itself, in place of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, became the scene of an interesting discussion. Scores of names were suggested before Uttar Pradesh was improvised and we had the spectacle of a 'nation' having a history running back to some thousands of years and the cradle of many a civilization, not having yet discovered its own name.

The Avadhi and Braj peoples constituting the bulk of the population of Uttar Pradesh do not also seem to have developed any emotional and psychological homogeneity or a community of culture, ever since the time of the



*Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. It is no accident that Tulsi composed his *Ram Charit Manas* in Avadhi and Sur wrote his *Sur Sagar* in Braj Bhasha. The elements of similarity between the cultures of these two intimately connected neighbouring peoples are undoubtedly very great. But emphasizing and counting common factors only and ignoring cultural and emotional peculiarities which go back to over two thousand years, would result in regarding many of the present nations as non-existent.

As regards their history, the Avadhi and Braj peoples do not seem ever to have been historically united over a long period of time. The internal integrative forces were never even once powerful enough to knit these neighbouring peoples into one common life. The wave of Buddhism came from Magadha and later the Maurya dynasty rose from Patna. In the post Maurya period there were the Saurasena and Kosala kingdoms separately for Braj and Avadh. From the coins of that period some of the rulers of Saurasena appear to be Hindus while those of Kosala Buddhists. Then Kushans came from the west and there began at Mathura the rule of Kanishka famous in Pali literature. Thereafter Guptas came again from Magadha, Hinduism overshadowed Buddhism and Sanskrit pushed aside Prakrits. In the 6th century A.D. There arose in Avadh, which had by then relapsed into forests, petty chiefs who called themselves *Mukharis*. In the 7th century Harshavardhana came from Thanesar and set up a kingdom which also included portions of Avadh for sometime. In the 8th century and later till the coming of Muslims, Gurjara-Pratiharas came from Rajasthan and Malwa and set up their kingdom at Kanauj, Avadh generally remaining outside their sway. The Muslims invariably had separate kingdoms of Avadh and Braj called by them Agra province. When the Britishers lumped together these areas, they could choose no name other than the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.



There is hardly a century when these ancient and immortal peoples did not evolve new forms of protest and revolt against oppression. These forms whether religious or others were seldom common to Avadhi and Braj peoples, even the *sagun bhakti* flowered in two different forms in these two areas. The feats of courage and bravery of these people have found a permanent place in their cultures. The *bhashas* and sometimes even dialects have separate lores and legends about their heroes. It is difficult to find any legend or ballad of this type which embraces the whole of the people of Uttar Pradesh or of the Hindi region. The spirit of national unity manifested itself only as Avadhi, Bundeli, etc. during the Freedom struggle of 1857. Drawing attention to this Marx observed that the Sepoy Army "had 40,000 soldiers from Avadh, linked with one another by caste and national unity; the army led a single life : If the authorities offended any single regiment, it was taken as an insult by all the rest."<sup>13</sup>

It appears unnecessary to discuss here the material forces which resulted in these peculiarities of our history. It is, however, clear that whenever the cohesive force of foreign conquest was relaxed it were not the people of U.P. as such who exhibited any sense of unity but those of the areas which developed common *bhashas* now described as *Hindi ki Pradeshik Bhashayen*—the regional languages of the Hindi (area). Dr. V.S. Aggarwal, one of the founders of the *Janpad Andolan*, (movement for the furtherance of the 'dialects' of Hindi initiated by Hindi writers under the impetus of the national movement) stated in his manifesto "*Janpad Yojana*" that the present 'dialect' areas have a culture and history going back to several centuries. He cited *Markanday* and other *Puranas* to show "that our dialect areas have

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13. Karl Marx : Chronological Notes on the History of India.



retained all those cultural peculiarities till today;" He, however, ignored the various integrative forces which had brought together, at places partially and incompletely, the languages of clans, tribes and sub-national groups into the *bhashas*, the promotion of which was the aim of the *Janpad Andolan*.

How these smaller languages and dialects grew into *bhashas* would be clear from a study of the Avadhi language. Since the fall of the Gupta empire many dialects of the Avadhi language have been coming into prominence as the fortunes of tribes and newly emerging nationalities within Avadh rose and fell. Immediately before the coming of Mughals *Baiswari* was the dialect which enjoyed the dominant position. In it were written *Yagnik* and other *ahlas* popular throughout Northern India during that and subsequent periods. Tulsi did not write *Ram Charit Manas* in this dialect, nor did he write in Eastern Avadhi, the language of *Mohammad Jaisi's Padmavat*. The *sufi* Muslim poet Jaisi lived and died in the principality of Amethi, now in Sultanpur district. If he ever went for his language outside the dialect of that principality, it was only to the few neighbouring dialects of Eastern Avadh. However, the growth of mercantile economy had begun to weld together the languages of the people in Avadh into one common language, under the impetus provided by homogeneity which their common history and culture had given them. The extent of the new prosperity in Avadh is borne out by the fact that the land revenues from the Mughal province of Avadh almost doubled in course of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. This had inevitably resulted in the growth of a common standard speech soaring above many of the dialects of Avadh. Tulsi Das drew upon this language instead of making use of *Baiswari* or of the language of the Amethi principality. He further helped in evolving this standard



speech for Avadh, as did Luther in the case of Germany, by drawing upon the eastern and western dialects of Avadh. Tulsi was born at Banda in Bundelkhand and stayed for long at Banaras in Bhojpur area where he also acquired some of the Khari Boli terminology of the *nirgun* saints, who had a powerful centre there. His language, therefore, contains some elements of Bundelkhandi, Bhojpuri and Khari Boli but it has always been accepted that its basic grammatical stem and vocabulary are of Avadhi and not of Khari Boli. Despite that the great popularity of Tulsi's *Ramayana*, as *Ram Charit Manas* is called throughout Northern and Central India, is believed to have helped Khari-Boli-Hindi to emerge as a national language of the Hindi region. The fact that *Ram Charit Manas* acquired greater popularity in Punjab than in Braj Bhoomi or Rajasthan, where *Krishna Bhakti* continued to be more popular, is ignored altogether. The cause of the popularity of *Ram Charit Manas* lies elsewhere and in understanding it we virtually find the key to many difficult problems of our cultural past.

Tulsi Das preached *varana dharama*—caste system and *grihasta marg*—life of the world against that of renunciation. While emphasizing these, the fact of his having become a mirror of his time in his *Ram Charit Manas* is often ignored. A controversy has been going on among Hindi writers for some years now about the exact character of Tulsi's *Ram Charit Manas*. Between Dr. Ram Bilas Sharma<sup>14</sup> who regards Tulsi's writings as a powerful force against the feudalism of his time and Bhadant Anand Kaushalyayan<sup>15</sup> who describes Tulsi Das as one of the greatest upholders of Brahmanic oppression, these writers have expressed diverse opinions<sup>16</sup>,

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14. Naya Path, Lucknow—August, 1953.

15. Naya Path, Lucknow—July, 1955.

16. Amongst these, three outstanding contributins are by  
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many of them not generally regarding Tulsi Das as progressive.

It has previously been stated that Tulsi Das was the best and the foremost representative of the fourth form of religious opinion which had begun to come to the fore with the growth of mercantile economy. This form, preached both the acceptance and criticism of social evils and treating them as the squalid foundation on which the life of the spirit could be based. This served the best interests of the trading classes, because it not only helped them to reconcile religion to the new business practices needed for commercial competition but also to curb the revolutionary and anarchist tendencies of *nirgunvad* and asceticism so deadly for the developing economy. With the growth of new economic life, the need for synthesis of the greed and squalor of the external world with life of religion, now more and more personal and 'inner', became paramount and thus this fourth form of religious opinion acquired increasing popularity.

Tulsi Das's assertion of the virtues of the caste system and the worship of the *brahmin*—at innumerable places Lord Rama himself is shown as worshipping the feet of the *brahmins*—was not at that time as reactionary as some believe it to be<sup>17</sup>. Looking at the coming of Muslims as we do from a distance of many centuries, one is likely to miss the point that during those times the people might have

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Bhagwat Saran Upadhyaye (*Naya Path* November, 1953), Aditya Misra (*Naya Sahitya*, October, 1951) and Parshu Ram Chaturvedi (Kalpana, February 1953).

17. John Irwin : "It is perhaps sufficient here to say that the essential character of medieval society in India was not, of course, determined by the caste system, but by the craft mode of production whereby each individual fulfilled an



been having a feeling that their very survival was at stake. Tulsi says in the *Balkhand of Ram Charit Manas* that "In whatever land they (the muslim invaders) find cows and brahmins, they set fire to village, city and town". Most of the arid regions of the Panjab, Rajasthan and Sind resulted from the despoliation of forests and irrigation works by the early Muslim armies. The desert of Rajasthan and Eastern Sind were created by these hordes just a the Great Sahara was mainly the creation of nomad Arab tribes who "skinned alive" the forested lands of North and Central Africa.<sup>18</sup>

This accounts for the large-scale emigration of Rajput,

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organic functional role within the community on the basis of craft. The rigid hierarchical divisions must be seen in relation to the wider socio-economic integration. A person was identical with his role in society and he did not yet conceive himself as an individual except through the medium of social role; and although there was no personal freedom in the modern bourgeois sense of unrestricted choice there was a great deal of concrete individualism in real life. It is only today when the medieval mode of production has become a fetter on social advance, that the tyrannical and reactionary nature of the caste system is revealed." (Class Struggle in Indian History and Culture—Modern quarterly, Vol.1, No. 2, March 1946)

18. Cf. Richard St. Barbe Baker : "Sahara Challenge"- London 1954. Writing on "The Problem of the Sahara" Prof.S.Yarkov observes: "One thousand five hundred years ago the Arabs appeared in Central Africa and in the course of their advance into the heart of the continent destroyed the ago-old forests. this was followed by the depredations of their huge herds of camels and goats which consumed much of grass, tree and leaves"—New Times, Moscow, September 8, 1955.



Abhira and Gujara tribes from Rajasthan near about the tenth century A. D. As the people living in many parts of North-West India "became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions" through ravage and pillage by the invading armies and as those in some other areas were compelled to leave their hearths and homes by the oncoming aridness, the tales they carried enlarged upon this destruction and despoliation. If the religious practices of the new rulers were altogether different, their war practices too must have appeared equally incomprehensible to the people living in those times. Even Akbar ordered a general massacre after his conquest of Chittor and constructed a tower of skulls at Gujrat. Century after century the new invaders, quite different from those who came before them, kept pouring in. Those endless marches and subsequently wars of succession repeatedly laid waste their towns and villages. Seeing this the Indians of those times must have been seized with a mortal fear. Even the popular acceptance of Islam as a form of defiance and revolt by some low-caste craft-groups, clans and tribes, increased the sense of insecurity and fear of others. This made them cling on persistently to the caste system, which though the cause of the stagnation of their social life, was also a means of its survival. The caste system had helped in creating a climate of opinion in which the *vaishyas* and the *shudras* suffered exploitation by *kshatriyas* and *brahmins* and surrendered their surplus without much coercion. Substitution of force by religious sanctions gave cohesion where there would have been conflict and this imparted an unchangeability and stability to the system. The *kshatriya* class had gone to pieces under the blows struck by the Muslim invaders. No wonder that the caste system, as preached by Tulsi Das stood only for unconditional surrender before the *brahmins*. This was a culmination of the process referred to earlier, whereby all the non-Hindu communities and creeds in India had increasingly tended to accept Brahminism in order to resist



the impact of Islam. How effective this acceptance of the caste system and the supremacy of the Brahmin was as a weapon of survival is seen in the rise of Sikhism to fulfil a similar need in a different way. Sikh Gurus stoutly opposed everything that came with the Muslims, e.g. tobacco and cutting of the hair—according to Al-Beruni and others, Indians before the coming of Muslims used to keep long hair and beard excepting some sections of the *Brahmins and sanyasis*.<sup>19</sup> Sikh Gurus, however, tried to undermine the rigidity of the caste system. The result was that in the Panjab resistance to Islam, though very militant, lacked the impregnable strength which the caste system gave it elsewhere in Northern India.

If Tulsi Das had really believed in Brahmanic orthodoxy, he would have stuck on to Sanskrit, the traditional language of the Brahmins. In the introductory *padas* of *Ram Charit Manas*, Tulsi Das stated that he was anxious to keep himself away from the traditional language of the pandits and wanted to write in the people's language. Tulsi's adoption of the *nirgun* tradition of *Nam* i.e. *Ram Nam*—was rather an attack on Brahmin priestcraft. The *nirgun bhakti* movement by calling upon the individual to seek perfection in his own way irrespective of caste, creed or walk of life had in fact provided one of the greatest challenges to orthodoxy during the feudal period.

The *Ramayana* tale was becoming increasingly popular in the centuries preceding Tulsi.<sup>20</sup> It embodied a great message of hope, for its story recounted that even in the

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19. Al-Beruni, *Kitab-ul-Hind*—Anjuman-e-Tarraqi-e-Urdu, Delhi.

20. A.L. Basham : "It is perhaps significant that his (Rama's) cult became really popular after the Muslim invasion"—(The Wonder that was India).



darkness of an age when the demon-king Ravana had conquered all the world, heaven and hell, Rama, a descendant of the sun-god won victory and dispelled darkness. This story reasserted the sanctity of family life and the need for personal virtues, in a world, the squalor of which was becoming more and more beyond human control, as money economy advanced. In an atmosphere of moral laxity, it emphasized the need for fidelity, the sanctity of promise and the value of human relations. The story of Lord Rama really very much suited those times, and there must have been a widespread demand for its rendering into spoken languages. Sidney Finkelstein<sup>21</sup> has described how translation of the Bible into the vernacular languages and the interpretation of religion in terms of the needs of the people became in Europe, one of the forms taken by the struggles of the peasantry, the weavers, the artisans and the middle classes against the feudal lords.<sup>22</sup> Such a translation of the *Ramayana* must have then become the crying need in India as persons alien in religion and race became the ruling chieftains and feudal lords. In preparing the popular version of the *Ramayana*, Tulsi Das took over all the prosodic forms created by the people. While upholding the caste system and the holiness of *brahmins*, he harboured sympathy and friendship for all classes. The *shudra* Nishada is received at Ayodhya 'like Lakshman' and on departing Lord Ram calls him 'a friend' and 'a brother.'

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21. Sidney Finkelstein : How Music Expresses Ideas—International Publishers; New York.

22. Dinesh Chandra Sen in his celebrated *History of Bengali Language and Literature* (Calcutta 1911) stated how in his life-long efforts to collect medieval vernacular manuscripts, he almost invariably found these only in low caste houses.



Tulsi's *Ram Charit Manas* acquired great popularity amongst Hindus from beyond the banks of the Indus to the mouth of the Ganges and continued to be popular all these centuries not because it was in their own colloquial language or that they understood it as much as a native of Avadh would, but because it became an instrument with which the people could cling on, under most adverse circumstances, to what they believed to be the best and the noblest in their cultural heritage. Emphasis on *Ram nam* in the tradition of the *nirgun* saints in addition to the *sagun* idol-worship, together with a faithful depiction of those times—even King Dashratha's *raj-sabha* is described as *darbar* and Lord Rama is again and again referred to as *Sahib*—gave it unprecedented popularity. The fact of its being in Avadhi, the language of the land of Rama, rather helped in increasing its mystic influence over the people who could not fully follow it.

It is stated as an argument against the Avadhi language that "the Avadhi spoken in Unao, Sitapur, Allahabad and Jaunpur districts varies greatly."<sup>23</sup> This is partly true and there is no denying the fact that the standard languages could not develop in their fullness in Northern India, particularly in the Hindi area, because mercantile economy received an early set-back and there was rather great impoverishment of the people under the later Mughals. Subsequently, came the British rule which strengthened feudal relations side by side with the development of capitalist forms of exploitation. However, lack of the full development of these *bhashas* would show that if languages could not grow on such a small scale, how impossible it was for them to integrate on a scale as vast as the entire

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23. Dr. Ram Bilas Sharma : On the language Question in India—The Communist, September-October, 1949, Peoples Publishing House, Bombay.



Hindi region. What is worth noting is that Tulsi wrote not in any dialect of Avadhi but in the language soaring above and born out of those dialects. Further Tulsi's *Ramayana* has enriched the spiritual life of Avadh to an extent and in a manner unknown elsewhere it acquired popularity. Even the Gazetteer of India admitted :—

"Eastern Hindi (Avadhi) through the works of Muhamed Mullik Jaisi and Tulsi Das became the language of poetry of the very highest order. This poetry being founded on the genuine tongue of the people and acquiring no fictitious dignity by bastard addition of Sanskrit words has reacted on the spoken language, so that the forms of speech heard on the fields of Avadh possess the characteristic beauties of poetry and clearness. Every Avadh rustic is soaked in his national literature and quotations from his great writers fall more naturally from his lips than the words of Burns fall from those of a Scotsman."<sup>24</sup>

Similarly Sur made use of the newly developing standard language of the Braj region and in turn helped in the evolution of Braj Bhasha. A Rajasthani poet of that period, significantly, referred in a couplet to the country of Braj people as Braj Desh, and their common language as "sweet" Abul Fazal in *Ayeen-e-Akbari* distinguishes the language of Delhi—*Zaban-e-Dehlvi*—from Braj Bhasha. During the time of Aurangzeb, Mirza Khan included the grammar of Braj Bhasha in his book entitled "Tohfa-tul-Hind." Not only in the history of 'Middle Hindi' literature but in that of Hindi literature in general, *Riti Kal* is considered to be the richest and the most glorious period. This prolific flowering of literature in Braj Bhasha began after the Mughal court shifted to Agra, the heart of Braj area. If in other languages of the



Hindi region similarly rich flowering of literature could not come about for one reason or the other, it does not mean that standard languages were not sprouting and growing in those areas.

Shri Satyendra referring to Braj Bhasha, states : "Some people have begun to think that *Braj bhasha*, bereft of its former glory, has become poor. Braj Bhasha is as alive today as it was at the time of Sur Das. Today also the language possesses the same power of expression. Is there a language which can equal it in sweetness?" Similar opinion has been expressed in regard to their own *bhasha* by the other contributors to *Hindi ki Pradeshik Bhashaen*—"The Regional languages of the Hindi Area"<sup>25</sup>. In recent years many histories of language and literature of these *bhashas* have been brought out, all maintaining the separate entity of these languages and contesting that these are dialects of Hindi. Referring to the same Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayana observes : "Among the languages of the 'Hindi Area,' Braj, Rajasthani, Awadhi and Maithili have been literary languages from very early times and as regards the other languages, too, we cannot dismiss them as dialects for the simple reason that they do not have any body of written literature. We cannot do so because they are capable of expressing all kinds of emotions and nowadays their literature has also begun to be created"<sup>26</sup>

In fact recognition of these *bhashas* as separate languages is not a new phenomenon. A.F.Rudolf Hoernel drew attention

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25. *Hindi ki Pradeshik Bhashaen*—Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi

26. Rahul Sankrityayana : The Language Question—Indian Literature Bombay, No. 3 of 1953.



to this more than 75 years ago. Referring to Eastern and Western Hindi, the names given to the languages of Northern India, he observed : "The terms are not good ones, as they give too much of an impression that Western and Eastern Hindi are merely two different dialects of the same (Hindi) language. In reality they are as distinct from one another, as Bengali in the east and Panjabi in the west, are supposed to be distinct from what is commonly called Hindi. Indeed the likeness between Eastern Hindi and Bihari is much closer than between Eastern Hindi and Western Hindi; and on the other hand, the affinity between Western Hindi and Panjabi is much greater than between Western Hindi and Eastern Hindi. In short, Western Hindi and Eastern Hindi have as much right to be classed as distinct languages rather than different dialects, as Panjabi and Bengali."<sup>27</sup> Referring to the same two decades later, Grierson maintained "Bengali is much more nearly related to and much more like the Bihari dialects, than they are to the Hindi dialects; and vice versa, Punjabi is much more nearly related to and is like the Hindi dialects than they are to the Bihari. It, therefore, follows as a necessary logical sequence that if Bengali and Punjabi are to be considered as languages independent of Bihari and Hindi groups of dialects respectively, much more must these Bihari and Hindi groups of dialects be considered as languages independent among themselves and each other."<sup>28</sup> Both Hoernel and Grierson described in detail grammatical differences such as in pronunciation, derivation, inflexion, construction, vocables, etc., between the languages of the Eastern and Western groups of Hindi to prove their point.

Subsequent studies even by orthodox Hindi writers have continued to emphasize the grammatical differences between

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27. A.F. Rudolf Hoernel : A Grammar of the Eastern Hindi.

28. G.A. Grierson : Seven Grammars of the Bihari Language.



the various regional languages of the Hindi area. It has been recognised that Hindi is nearer to Panjabi than to Avadhi or Bihari. Dr. S.K.Chatterji rather thinks that the Panjabis being virile people, it is "their influence which makes Hindustani, the most virile language of Northern India,"<sup>29</sup> Sri Ayodhya Singh admitting that Hindi means one thing according to linguistic science and a different thing according to literature observes : "Though like Bengali and Oriya, Bihari is also derived from Maghadi (Prakrit) yet for many reasons (not mentioned) it is rightly considered Hindi."<sup>30</sup> In the same connection Dr. Shyam Sunder Das states : "Avadhi and Braj are both literary dialects and do not belong to the same family as Hindi". W. H. Fallon emphasized as early as 1870, that :

"The most natural and expressive idioms are present in the spoken, not the written language.....Native scholars who plume themselves on their acquired literary language which distinguishes them from the masses, are commonly as ignorant as they are scornful of many a forceful and expressive phrases and idioms of the vulgar tongue which only await the appearance of some master mind who can discern the subtle affinities between the hosts of words that lie ready at hand... The fossil remains of a long extinct vernacular with the more recent unassimilated additions from the dead languages which constitute a large portion of Urdu and Hindi, are tame and colourless besides the warmth and glow of the living speech."<sup>31</sup>

Referring to the same Dr. Vasudev Saran Aggarwal

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29. S.K. Chatterji : Indo-Aryan and Hindi.

30. Ayodhya Singh : *Hindi Bhasha Aur Sahitya ka Vikas*.

31. S.W. Fallon : Introduction to New Hindustani-English Dictionary : Lazarus & Co., Banares.



observes: "The words of these *janpad bhashas* have a many-sided richness of meaning. The fascinating manner in which these words can give expression to feelings cannot be acquired by our heavy style of writing which can move along only with the crutches of Sanskrit "<sup>32</sup>

Stressing the separate entity of various 'regional languages' Dr. Amar Nath Jha stated in his Convocation Address at the Agra University in 1943 :

"Hindi is not my mother-tongue. I stated this openly at the Abohar session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. The fact that Hindi is not my mother-tongue does not mean that I have nothing to do with Hindi."

In a letter to the editor, Madhukar, Dr. Jha expressed the opinion that it will be unreasonable to "disfavour" the use (for literary purposes) of Avadhi, Bhojpuri, Braj Bhasha, and Rajasthani.<sup>33</sup>

The grammar of a language is, moreover, of much greater significance than its vocabulary. The grammatical rules governing the modification of words and their combination into sentences give coherence and its distinct personality to a language. It is generally recognised that the grammars of these *bhashas* are different. Even the words from the same roots have their own peculiarities in different *bhashas*. Referring to this Fallon observed: "The large number of Hindi words from a single root and their usually numerous secondary meanings testify to the vitality of the living root which continually throws out new shoots."<sup>34</sup>

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32. Letter to editor Madhukar—Madhukar, Janpad Andolan Ank, April-August, 1944.

33. Ibid.

34. S.W. Fallon : New Hindustani English Dictionary.



The presence of dialects in a language does not nullify its existence. The circumstances under which the 'dialects' of the *bhashas* could not fully commingle and concentrate into the standard language, have been discussed already. A complete mixing up of 'dialects' does not generally take place without a complete reordering of society, resulting from the industrial revolution. In Northern India mercantile economy received an early set-back and there was a further consolidation of feudalism with the coming of the British. This made it impossible for the dialects or the languages of tribes and smaller nationalities to completely merge into the standard language. There is hardly an Indian language of today from Panjabi to Bengali and from Kashmiri to Malayalam which does not have dialects and *bhashas* are in no different position.

A study of the origin of the Panjabi language would show that circumstances were ripe for the sprouting of modern Indian language only in the sixteenth century and then also on scale not large enough for the whole of the Hindi region. The origin of the modern Panjabi language, too is wrongly traced to the eleventh and twelfth century.<sup>35</sup> At that time even the name 'Panjab' had not yet begun to be applied to the land of the five rivers. Al-Beruni referred to this land as *Panchnad*. With the coming of Muslims, Lahore became the capital town. Almost centrally situated between Eastern and Western Panjab it was, in the course of several centuries, able to help in the mixing up of the dialects of both the areas into one standard language. In his list of languages of India at his time, Amir Khusro mentioned 'Lahori', 'Multani', etc. The Sikh Gurus did not write in any standard Panjabi but in Hindvi, Old Hindvi, Sahaskriti, or in the various dialects of the Panjab. Guru Gobind Singh

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35. Cf. Payara Singh Padam : *Panjabi Boli da Itihas*, Manjit Publishing Co., Patiala.



wrote also in Braj Bhasha. The writers of Jang Namas, and the Sufi poets similarly wrote in dialects or in mixture of the neighbouring ones. The trade route from Delhi to Kabul was now through Lahore instead of Multan in the south or Sialkot in the north. Under the Mughals Lahore further developed into a great centre of industry and trade. It eclipsed Multan and other towns as the market for horses and the shawls manufactured here were exported far and wide. Under the later Mughals, as the situation in the Deccan and the eastern provinces became more and more unsettled, Lahore became the most important city of the Empire. Thomas Moore in his famous poem *Lalla Rookh*, referred to the splendour of Lahore during those times. This commercial prosperity helped in the emergence of a standard speech out of various Panjabi dialects, which was described by Mohsan Fani in *Dubistan-e-Muzahib* (1645 A.D.) as *Zaban-e-Jatan-e-Panjab*. In the beginning of the seventeenth century Bhai Gur Das wrote his *waran* with many elements of this standard speech. Shortly afterwards came Waris's *Heer* which, basing itself on this standard Panjabi, drew upon several Panjab dialects and thus helped in the further development of Modern Panjabi.<sup>36</sup> Woven round a popular romantic tale it embraced all the castes, communities and classes. Sikh rule shook further the framework of feudalism and Lahore centrally situated gained greater importance. Under the British, Lahore emerged as one of the greatest administrative, educational, religious and cultural centres in India as the Panjab High Court and Panjab University grew in importance and as it more and more became the focal point of Arya Samaj, Sanatan Dharam, Anjuman-e-Hamayat-e-Islam and similar movements. This helped further in the spread of standard Panjabi to various dialect areas which had never remained completely isolated as elsewhere,

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36. Cf. Surinder Singh Narula : *Panjabi Sahitya Da Itihas*; Sikh Publishing House, Amritsar.



because of incessant invasions and immigrations from the west. The absence of an industrial revolution was partly made good by two factors—monopoly of service in the British Indian Army which brought together villagers from every part of the Panjab and large-scale settlements in the canal colonies of Central and Western Panjab of people belonging to the eastern areas. Despite all these factors there are still some areas which continue to retain their dialectal peculiarities. One of them Jammu has won recognition for its language Dogri and another Multan has advanced claim to a separate language.

Though standard languages began to sprout in the *bhasha* areas, simultaneously if not earlier,<sup>37</sup> than the Panjab, many of the factors at work in the Panjab were absent there. It is, however, noteworthy that integrative forces were too weak to weld all these diverse dialects throughout the length and breadth of Northern India into one language.

The development of these *bhashas* and their full flowering as literary languages will provide Hindi with an inexhaustible mainspring of the living idiom. These *bhashas*—Avadhi, Rajasthani, Braj Bhasha, Khari Boli, Bundelkhandi, Bhojpuri, Magadhi and Maithili are in many respects among the most developed languages of the world. The inheritors of world's most ancient culture as these people are, their languages have acquired an unsurpassable maturity and richness. How great will the Hindi language become, if it begins to be watered by these perennial streams!

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37. There is no doubt that Bengali and Bihari languages arose earlier than others in Northern India because those areas were free from repeated destruction at the hands of early Muslim invaders. A Muslim chronicler of the 12th century while referring to the low standard of living in the Panjab, the Khari Boli, Braj and Avadh areas, described Bengal as "a hell full of good things."



Mahatma Gandhi counselled Pandit Nehru to act upon the following advice whenever he was in doubt :

"I will give you a *talisman*. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it ? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* for hungry and spiritually starving millions?"

Thinking of the poor peasant with whose toils and triumphs the *bhashas* are so intimately tied, it is not difficult to reach the right conclusion. Recognition of the *bhashas* side by side with Hindi will conform to the most profound aspirations of the masses and will unleash creative forces never known before in the long history of these ancient people.



## THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN HINDI

Hindi or Hidustani as it is sometimes called, is in many respects the greatest heritage of the people of Northern India. While emphasizing its non-colloquial character outside the Khari Boli area, where *bhashas* or 'regional languages' are the colloquial speeches, it is often thought that Hindi and the *bhashas* are mutually exclusive. The supporters of Hindi deny the existence of these *bhashas* altogether and the supporters of *bhashas* have equally vehemently begun to disclaim any link with Hindi. Both the groups find no dearth of analogies and parallels from the linguistic history of other countries, while all the time overlooking the peculiarities of our own.

The great part religion played in determining the peculiarities of our history has already been referred to. Everywhere organised religion has been the essential part of the feudal system, one could not be changed without the other, as is shown by the Reformation in Europe. History of the scientific revolution in Europe also shows the great effect religion, as a superstructure, had on the basis. It took the best part of 1000 years in carrying out the amount of thinking that, without these accretions and obstructions, would have been packed in less than 200 years.

In India religion had a much more profound effect on society because it altogether sterilized scientific thinking. The superstructure comes into existence to serve the basis



actively and to enable it to consolidate itself. Later with changes in the basis, without which no progress is possible, the old superstructure becomes a brake and side by side arise new forms of superstructure to serve the new elements growing within the basis and to contend against the old ones. In India religious superstructure became unusually active and exceedingly paramount. Seeping into every aspect of superstructure and the basis, it did not merely consolidate but also solidify production-relations which mainly constitute the basis. More than that it virtually solidified the basic instruments of production; methods of agriculture and transport have remained changeless throughout the long period of feudalism in India. It has also been mentioned earlier that one of the means through which this came about was the caste system which stabilized forms of exploitation based upon slavery and on family-commune and village-commune of the earlier epoch, side by side with feudalization of society. Religion, likewise, has had an equally profound effect on linguistic evolution in India. Unless we can understand the part it has played in making languages based upon or mixed with Khari Boli generally intelligible in many parts of Northern India without superseding or supplanting the colloquial speeches, we will not be able to appreciate the nature and importance of Modern Hindi.

Braj Bhasha has been associated with *Krishna Bhakti*, Persianised form of Khari Boli with Muslim religion in India and some Khari Boli vocables and grammatical forms with *yogis*, *sadhus* and *nirgun saints*. *Krishna Bhakti* was centred round Mathura and did not have any order of wandering mendicants though devotees of Lord Krishna generally everywhere preferred Braj Bhasha for their *bhakti* songs. As against that *Khari Boli* was carried far and wide by the *nirgun sadhus*, *yogis* and mendicants, who wandered from place to place and who had their centres all over India. There were times during the feudal period when every



fifth or sixth Indian was a *sadhu*. Throughout that period, their number used to be quite large. Tulsi in *Ram Charit Manas* described this as one of the evils of *Kaliyuga* and stated that "men of the lowest castes—oilmen, potters, *chandalas*, *kiratas*, *kols*—shave their heads and become wandering mendicants, claiming reverence from the *brahmins*". This, no doubt, brought into existence many centres and groups of people outside the Khari Boli area which had developed some familiarity with Khari Boli elements.

A similar impetus was received by Khari Boli when Urdu developed at the Mughal courts and in the Deccan kingdoms and when Muslim saints—*sufis*—and Indian Muslims outside the Khari Boli area took to Urdu as the language of their religion.<sup>1</sup> In many parts of India Urdu is still called *Nabi-ji-ki-Zaban* or the language of the Prophet. It is recorded in the Census Report for 1931 that some aristocratic Bengali families tried to discard Bengali and to take to Urdu after their conversion to Islam. Dr. Uday Narain Tiwari refers to a language called Sheikhai or *Julahi Boli* which contain an admixture of Arabic, Persian and *Khari Boli* vocables with *Maithili* which Muslim weavers—

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1. Dr. Mohammad Hasan : "Directly assisting the process were the scattered groups of Muslim mystics who travelled far and wide with the message of love and universal fraternity on their lips..Naturally enough these mystics adopted the syntax and the grammatical structure of the existing languages and used words of Persian and Arabic which also took the form of another script later on"—"Some Thoughts on Cultural Commission Report" : Indian Literature, Bombay, No.3, 1953. Also Cf. Maulvi Abdul Haq : *Sufis Work in the Early Development of Urdu Language*—The Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-e-Urdu (India), Delhi 1939.



the *Ansars*—employ as their jargon in North Bihar.<sup>2</sup> In the Bhojpuri areas, Urdu is called "*Mughalai*" or the language associated with the Mughals. In South India Urdu used to be called Moors—a language of the Muslims. According to the Census report for 1951, nearly five lakh Muslims in the Madras State, claimed Urdu as their mother-tongue. Referring to this the report says : "It is true that these Muslims study Quoran in Arabic, but their mother-tongue is undoubtedly Tamil...But they claim Urdu or Hindustani as their mother-tongue".<sup>3</sup>

Undue emphasis has been laid on the traders from Delhi carrying Khari Boli to towns in other parts of India after the downfall of the Mughal Empire and thereby making it a colloquial speech in those parts.<sup>4</sup> Traders normally tend to adopt the language of the customers they come to live with and gradually lose their own. Many of the towns laid waste in the Panjab by the invading hordes survive today only in the names of sub-castes and family surnames of *kshatriyas*, *aroras*, *agarwalas*, etc. who emigrated to the east. *Chope* a sub-caste of *aroras* originated from *Chaupayata*, another *arora* caste *Baluje* from *Valijyaka* and a *kshatriya* caste *Batra* from *Vatraka*. *Sharaliya* a sub-caste of the *aggarwala* community traces its original seat to Saharla in Ludhiana district, referred to as *Saralaka* by Panini. All these castes and subcastes of the trading communities from the Punjab and the Khari Boli area continue to live on in the Uttar Pradesh and other States without retaining the slightest link with their earlier language. The traders who migrated to east, after the desolation of Delhi, would have likewise

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2. Dr. Uday Narain Tiwari : *Bhasha Aur Sahitya*.

3. Census Report of India 1951, Madras Coorg Vol.2,p.1.

4. Cf. Introduction to *Hindi Shabad Sagar* : Kashi Nagri Pracharni Sabha.



forgotten their Khari Boli language—and many of them did forget it—if Urdu had not been enforced as the court language of Bihar, U.P. and Central India by the British rulers. Moreover, these traders were hardly a lakh in number, while the wandering mendicants and the Muslim saints and laymen who took to Khari Boli as their language were in millions. There can be no two opinions about the language of religion having a much more profound influence on an Indian than the language of trade.

A contributory factor, generally overlooked, is that the grammar of Khari Boli is very simple. Grierson referring to this observed : "It is worth noting that of all the languages of Northern India it is the one which carries analysis to its furthest extreme. It has only one tense, the present conjunctive for its verbs and has only one true case for its nouns. Nearly all the accidents of time and relations are expressed by the aid of participles, auxiliary verbs or post positions."<sup>5</sup>

This brings us to the question as to whether Urdu originated under Muslim influence in India or without it. For several decades now a lot of hair-splitting has been going on regarding the origin of Urdu and Modern Hindi. Many supporters of Urdu have been contesting the statement, originally made by Grierson, that Urdu resulted from the impact of Islam on India. They rather contend that Modern Hindi was the creation of the British and resulted merely from the substitution of *tadbhava* colloquial words in Urdu by *tatsm* Sanskrit words. Persian words probably began to come into the Indian languages in the beginning of the Christian era when fresh waves of immigrants brought some of these words with them. Later Panjab came under the Persian overlordship. Further, some link has throughout

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5. Linguistic Survey of India Vol. IX Part II.



persisted between India and Iran.<sup>6</sup> There is, however, no doubt that a majority of the Persian words and administrative terms at present in the Indian languages got infiltrated after Persian became the official language of the Mughal courts. A similar phenomenon took place in Eastern Europe also and the languages of the countries like Yugoslavia which came under the suzerainty of Turks have a larger number of Persian, Arabic and Turkish words than their neighbours who remained outside it.<sup>7</sup>

The birth of Urdu is, however, quite different from the process of mixing up of some Persian and Arabic words into the languages of India. Such a borrowing of Persian and Arabic words took place in Pashto, Panjabi, Marathi,<sup>8</sup> Bengali,<sup>9</sup> and even Tamil<sup>10</sup> without in any way giving rise to a language similar to Urdu. Maulvi Abdul Haq has drawn attention to the presence of a large number of Persian words in the Marathi language and Prof. H.C.Paul has similarly referred to the presence of a large number of Persian and Arabic words in colloquial Bengali.

Urdu arose as an artificial language of the Muslim ruling

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6. Cf. R.E.M. Wheeler : Iran and India in Pre-Islamic Times. Ancient India No.4, July 1947 - January 1948; Archaeological Survey of India New Delhi.
  7. Cf. Muayen-ud-din : Urdu words in the Yugoslav language, *Hamari Zaban*, Aligarh. June 15, 1955.
  8. Maulvi Abdul Haq : *Marahati Zaban Par Farsi ka Asar*. Anjuman-e-Taraqi-e-Urdu, Aurangabad.
  9. Cf. H.C. Paul : *Shifted Meanings of some Arabic and Persian Words in Bengali*—Calcutta Review, August 1952 and November 1953.
  10. C.f. V.I. Subramanian : Muslim Literature in Tamil—Tamil Culture. Madras, January, 1953.



class and its entourage during the Mughal period. It resulted from the grafting of a large Persian and Arabic vocabulary and some of their grammatical rules on the grammatical stem and basic stock of words of Khari Boli. Coming of the Muslims to India and the establishment of their government at Delhi is the direct cause of the evolution of Urdu. India is not the only country where marriage between the native and a foreign language gave birth to a new artificial or colloquial language. The word *lingua franca* itself was originally the name of the "mixture of Italian, French, Greek and Spanish used in the Levant"<sup>11</sup> During the last half a century or so, the grafting of French with Bhojpuri, the native tongue of the plantation workers who emigrated from Eastern U.P. and Bihar to Mauritius, has resulted in an altogether new language—the 'Creole'. The Papiamentu language of Curacao, a small island above South America, similarly came into existence as a result of the mixture of Spanish and English. This is "a language of the poor who have no opportunity to learn foreign languages but who must have some means of communication with the foreigners in order to make a living"<sup>12</sup> India is also not the only country where religious differences have resulted in different languages, Croatian and Serbian are essentially the same languages but they are presented in very different outer forms because of the religious differences of the people speaking them. The two languages of the Jewish people Judesmo and Yiddish came into existence by the mixing up of Hebrew with Spanish and German respectively.

The two names of the Urdu language, Rekhta and Urdu, are significant. Rekhta meant a mixture and Urdu was the name for the entourage of the Moghul courts where that

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11. C.f. Concise Oxford Dictionary.

12. New Times, Moscow, No.2 of 1950—Travel Notes.



mixing up of languages took place. With the growth of this language as the religious language of the Muslims and for the purposes of general intercourse between the ruling class and the people, it acquired more and more colloquial elements, but throughout it remained a class-language. The general association of this language with the Muslims cannot be denied. This has been admitted by the greatest among Urdu writers. Insha-Allah described it in *Darya-e-Latafat* as "the language of Shahjehanabad (Delhi)'s courtiers, camp-followers, courtesans, Muslim artisans, libertines, pages and slaves." Mir Aman Dehalvi in the introduction to *Bag-O-Bahar* described how Urdu arose at the Mughal court particularly under Emperor Shahjehan when the city of Delhi was described both as Shahjehanabad and Urdu-e-Mualla.<sup>13</sup> Introduction to the greatest Urdu lexicon—the four volume *Farhang-e-Asafia* quoted a Mughal prince Arshad Gorgani as saying : "Everyone admits that idiomatic Urdu is the language of Timuri (Mughal) princes and that Red Fort is its mint. Therefore Syed Ahmed Dehlvi used to send for us and would not care (for the language) of the common people." Maulvi Syed Ahmed himself observed in the same introduction : "I cannot accept the position that the language should depart from the standard idiom...We cannot allow our language to become that of the riff-faff, the washermen or the uncouth or merely an assortment or a jumble of words. We also do not like the Urdu which has been adopted by

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13. After Emperor Shahjehan the name Urdu-e-Mualla—the Exalted Camp—became restricted to the areas between *Dariba* and Red Fort, Delhi . Ever since then abbreviation "Urdu" has continued to be used for that part of Delhi. A *chhatta* song of 1857 Mutiny states:  
They looted Urdu and *Dariba* and *Maliwara* too :  
Looted the Gurwal's banking firms and all the temples too.



Indian Christians, new converts to Islam, the *khansamas* and orderlies of *Sahibs*, camp followers and by the mixed population of the cantonments—a language ridiculed with the appellation of *Purdo*." In the same connection Shams-ul-Ulema Maulvi Mohd. Azad remarked in his *Nazam-e-Azad* : "Urdu belongs to the descendants of those who actually spoke Persian. That is why they exactly copied Persian metres, the colourful ideas of Persian (literature) and various forms of Persian prosody". Denying the presence of Persian grammatical forms in Urdu, Ali Sardar Jafri has maintained that "the words *ghareeb* (poor) and *kitab* (book) in their plural form in the Persian would be *ghuraba* and *kutub* but in Urdu they have become *gharibon* and *kitaben* or *kitabon*."<sup>14</sup> There is not a single Urdu grammar which has disallowed the Persian forms of plurals—all of them rather sanction it. There is not a single important Urdu writer who has not used the Persian forms, the best among them more often than the Indian ones.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that many outstanding Urdu writers are Hindus and Sikhs while all the Hindi writers are Hindus, is often put forward as an argument in support of the non-communal character of Urdu and against its association with the coming of Muslims. When Persian was the language of the Muslim courts Hindus wrote in Persian as fluently as they do in English today. The British rulers made Urdu the court language and the medium of instruction in certain parts of the country and the people from all communities in these areas had to learn this language. This has lasted longest in

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14. Ali Sardar Jafri : Why Two literary Forms Urdu & Hindi—Indian Literature No.1 of 1953.

15. Pertinently enough the Urdu publishing house which has brought out most of Ali Sardar Jafri's works is called "Kutub."



the Panjab, which accounts for the fact that most of the non-Muslim Urdu writers today are Panjabis whose mother-tongue is not Urdu.

Another problem which has been perplexing historians of Hindi and Urdu is, when colloquial speeches change from area to area and not from community to community, how can Hindus and Muslims have separate preferences in regard to language. The paradox that Hindi and Urdu cannot be two separate languages without Hindus and Muslims becoming two separate nations baffles them. The fact that various groups and classes within a nation can have their own jargons created out of the common speech, is overlooked by them. The colloquial speech common to Hindus and Muslims is Khari Boli in areas near about Delhi and the respective *bhashas* in other areas. Hindi and Urdu are invariably referred to as two forms of the Hindustani language, while a colloquial speech necessarily exists in one form only. The very recognition of these two separate forms is an admission of the fact that one or both of these are non-colloquial languages.

Over a large part of Northern India Urdu is thus a non-colloquial language limited mainly to Muslims and the descendants of those Hindu castes which once came into intimate contact with them. This Urdu should not be confused with Khari Boli which did exist almost in its present form at the time of Amir Khusro and earlier. Amir Khusro never claimed this language to be the colloquial speech of Northern India and described it only as the "language of Delhi and the neighbourhood." Much has been made of Amir Khusro's few supposed writings in Hindi even though these are universally admitted to be unauthentic. Similarly it has been proved that Khusro's *Khaliq Bari* claimed by the historians of both Urdu and Hindi as the first extant work of their



language, was not by Amir Khusro but a work of the seventeenth century A.D. by one Zai-ul-Din Khusro.<sup>16</sup> However, Khari Boli existed before and side by side with Urdu and the other *bhashas*. The emergence of Urdu and Braj Bhasha rather prevented its growth beyond a 'dialect' despite its being the language of the capital town.

Subsequent emergence of Hindi as a non-colloquial language is somewhat similar to Urdu. Sometimes the origin of Hindi is traced to the twelfth or thirteenth century when early Muslim writers used the word Hindvi or Hindi, not for a particular language but as an adjective for 'Hind' and for all the languages of Northern India. It is, however, generally agreed that "literary Hindi came into its own after Braj Bhasha."<sup>17</sup> In the histories of Hindi literature *Riti Kal* consisting entirely of writings in Braj Bhasha lasted from Samvat 1700 to 1900 (1643 to 1843 A.D.) and immediately after that began the period of *Khari Boli* Hindi. Even though no explanation is given for the exclusion from Hindi literature of the later writings in Braj Bhasha etc. which have ceaselessly been taking place, it is sometimes admitted that literature in Khari Boli Hindi did not exist in the earlier period and that "it really began with Bhartendu Harish Chandra<sup>18</sup> (1850-85 A.D.)"

There are two theories regarding the origin of Modern Hindi during this period. The first is that it resulted from the substitution in Urdu of all Persian and many Hindustani words by *tatsam* Sanskrit words. There is no denying the

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16. C.f. *Khaliq Bari* edited by Prof. Mahmud Sherwani—Anjumane-Taraqi-e-Urdu, Delhi.

17. Ram Chandra Shukla : *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas*.

18. Braj Rattan Das : *Khari Boli Hindi ka Itihas*.



fact that much that was published in Devangari<sup>19</sup> script in the beginning was more or less Urdu, which was later on progressively Sanskritized. The second theory is that Modern Hindi arose independently of Urdu or even of the pure Khari Boli of the area near about Delhi. The fall of the Mughal empire resulted in the spread of Khari Boli to the cities in the entire Hindustani region and beyond. Western cities like Delhi and Agra lost their splendor and cities like Lucknow, Faizabad, Banaras, Patna, Murshidabad gained importance. Hindu traders of Delhi and the neighbouring towns went in search of livelihood to the eastern towns. the Khari Boli they spoke was a natural speech and not the *Zaban-e-Urdu-e-Mualla* of the former Muslim ruling class. This colloquial language of traders from the west maintained its basic character though it everywhere got tainted with the local speech. It is maintained that it was this Khari Boli and not the pure Khari Boli of the areas near about Delhi which became the base of Modern Hindi.<sup>20</sup>

There are elements of truth in both the above theories regarding the origin of Modern Hindi. A fact generally overlooked is that Khari Boli elements had already acquired comparative familiarity in centres of trade and pilgrimage in Northern India, due to factors which have been previously referred to. There is also no denying the fact that communal sentiments against Urdu, which had been declared the court language of areas with predominant Hindu population also played a part in the evolution of Modern Hindi.

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19. First periodical in the Devanagari script published from U.P., the *Banaras Akhabar* (1844) was in Urdu language and not in Modern Hindi.

20. Cf. *Introduction to Hindi Shabad Sagar*, Kashi Nagri Pracharni Sabha.



What distinguishes Modern Hindi from all other languages of Northern India is the change-over from *tadbhava* to *tatsam*.<sup>21</sup> Less than a century ago the vocabulary of Khari Boli Hindi began to be changed altogether and it was remarked by Grierson that "Hindi has fallen under the fatal spell of Sanskrit." All Indian languages till then had *tadbhava* words only resulting from the elimination of compound consonant and *diphthongs* and from the natural replacement of cerebral sounds by labial, dental and palatal. "In five hundred years these languages had expressed with crystal clearness any idea which the mind of man can conceive. Its old literature contains some of the heights of poetry. Treatises on philosophy and rhetoric are found in it, in which the subject has been handed with hardly any use of Sanskrit word."<sup>22</sup> Yet, in spite of 'Hindi' possessing a vocabulary and a power of expression scarcely inferior to any other language, it became a fashion to use Sanskrit words. This change-over to *tatsam* is less than a century old and it has made Modern Hindi very distant, not only from the *bhashas* but also from the colloquial Khari Boli of the areas nearabout Delhi. The controversy about Urdu and Hindi being the languages of two different groups in the same areas gets easily solved when it is realised that both Urdu and Hindi are non-colloquial languages created out of the same speech—Khari Boli—of Delhi and the neighbourhood.

Only non-colloquial languages and class-jargons can emerge as suddenly as did Modern Hindi. The non-colloquial

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21. Grierson : "*Tadbhava* words are those which have descended into modern vernaculars from Prakrit sources while *tatsam* words are those which have been borrowed in later times direct from Sanskrit to supply real or fancied deficiencies in vocabulary."

22. Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.IX, p.55.



character of this language is admitted even by those who regard it as the *lingua franca* of the entire Hindi Region. In the Introduction to *Hindi Shabad Sagar* published by Kashi Nagri Pracharni Sabha it is pointed out that Hindi today has to occupy a place which belonged to Sanskrit in the Gupta period, regardless of the fact that Sanskrit had by then become completely isolated from the colloquial speeches. Dr. Ram Bilas Sharma has conceded that "in the countryside the people speak a number of dialects which together are grouped as Avadhi, Braj Bhasha etc."<sup>23</sup> Dr. S. K. Chatterji describes the small elementary vocabulary of Khari Boli generally understood in Northern India as "Bazar Hindustani:" or "Laghu Hindi" and does not regard it as fit for any cultural purpose. He suggests that its grammar should be simplified and such changes as the making of all nouns and verbs masculine should be made. This, according to him, will help it to become a better 'communication-speech' of the Hindustani region's polygot towns.<sup>24</sup> Only the grammatical rules of a non-colloquial language can thus be artificially created. The grammar of a colloquial language consists merely of the observed facts of the language.

Munshi Prem Chand is stated to have once observed : "The Hindi literature has no past. The literature in Braj Bhasha or Avadhi is not Hindi literature."<sup>25</sup> Braj Bhasha, Avadhi and other languages could not have perished as suddenly as Hindi is believed to have come into existence. The history of Modern Hindi literature outlined in the various standard works on the subject would further bear out its

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23. Ram Bilas Sharma : On the Language Question in India; The Communist, Sept. Oct. 1939.

24. Cf. S.K. Chatterji : Indo-Aryan and Hindi.

25. Quoted by Braj Rattan Dass in Khari Boli Hindi ka Itihas.



non-colloquial nature. Ram Chandra Shukla in *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas* and Braj Rattan Das in *Khari Boli Hindi ka Itihas* state that the beginning of *Khari Boli Hindi* "in a regular manner" was first made by Munshi Sadasukhlal, Insha Allah Khan, Lallu Lal and Sadal Mishra near about 1803 at Fort Williams. It is contested by both that this happened under the influence of the British. Most of the writings of the above-mentioned four persons are claimed more by Urdu and some of the regional languages than by Hindi. Reference has also been made to William Carey's translation of the Bible into Sanskritized Hindi during the same period. It is mentioned that thereafter, "there is a virtual vacuum in Hindi prose from 1803 A.D. to 1858 A.D."<sup>26</sup> when it has its real beginning in the Bhartendu period. Hindi poetry, however, took longer to come into shape. Starting in the beginning of twentieth century, it took more than two decades to win the race against Braj Bhasha as the language of poetry.<sup>27</sup>

The above facts would show that Modern Hindi is a non-colloquial language, the colloquial speeches—the *bhashas* continue to live on and have some independent literature of their own, though it is no more included in the histories of Hindi literature, as used to be done before the Modern Hindi period. By not recognising the non-colloquial nature of Modern Hindi, we lose sight of the spirit and importance of this great heritage. No other people in the world speaking different languages have been bequeathed a better cementing force. It is not necessary, at present, to treat the peoples speaking the different *bhashas*—Braj, Avadhi, Rajasthani, Bundelkhandi, Bhojpuri, Maithili, Magadhai as full fledged nations in the modern sense or to

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26. Ibid.

27. The translation of Goldsmith's *Hermit* published in 1902 is believed by some to be the first poem in Modern Hindi.



treat these *bhashas* as fully developed national languages but these speeches, each a mother tongue of crores of people, undoubtedly exist and none has ever denied it. No doubt, it will be wrong to treat Hindi as the colloquial and therefore the only language of the entire Hindi region. The peculiarities of our history have made Hindi a language floating above the colloquial speeches, without ever doing them any harm, If this did not happen elsewhere, it is because the factors which brought about the present position of Hindi were peculiar to our country. The co-existence and fraternization of Modern Hindi and the *bhashas* is the cultural need of the people of the Hindi region. Without their mutual give and take, Hindi itself will wither away.

The latent possibilities of Hindi as a common heritage of the people of Northern India, if not of the whole of India, can be fully realised only after the *bhashas* come into their own. How great this heritage is, can be understood only if we think of the future as much as the present. As distances become less and less and as mankind advances towards the human destiny of socialism and towards consequent material and spiritual abundance, languages in various geographical regions and subcontinents will begin to come nearer and to coalesce. It might take Europe several centuries to evolve a stem around which the common language could grow and flower. The people of North India have been bequeathed a second language which has become theirs only a little less than the mother tongue and which can and will form the basis of the common colloquial speech of the future. Only through their most friendly co-operation and mutual give-and-take can this process be speeded up without deflecting from the right course.

Whether we do our mite or not, Hindi has a great future just as the immortal people of the Hindi region are destined



to a great future. The makers of one of the world's great cultures as these people are, they have the will and the capacity to create a civilization better than any before, provided they can take their destiny into their hands. When nations start on a new life as the Indian people are sure to do before long, thoughts and feelings are stimulated and new ideas acquire creativeness and vitality. Languages too then enrich themselves with particular rapidity and break out of the dead encrustment of centuries. Numberless master minds on such epochal moments spring out of the people who, with the innumerable words ready at hand, exhibit the force of nascent ideas as well as the living power of the language. One day Hindi will similarly belong to the people and acquire all their greatness. Let all those who cherish the Hindi language do their best to bring that day nearer.



## APPENDIX

### ASHTADHYAYI—A TURNING POINT IN INDIAN HISTORY

While studying Ashtadhyayi one should keep in view the currents and cross currents of ancient Indian history which gave rise to this unique grammatical system and the manner in which it determined the entire course of Indian history. Ashtadhyayi not only ordained the structure of the Sanskrit language but also that of Indian social polity, thus turning the Indian civilization to a course different from that of most other civilizations.

The purpose of Asthadhyayi was to perpetuate oral tradition. Before its full implication for Indian culture can be discussed, it appears necessary to consider whether writing was known during Panini's times. If despite Panini's knowledge of writing and the currency of one or more scripts during his and earlier times, he found it necessary to provide for the perpetuation of an oral tradition for Sanskrit, what was the compelling reason for this?

Max Muller maintained that not only before the time of Panini but also to Panini himself writing was unknown.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary Goldstucker argued that Panini had knowledge of writing and observes : "In short we see that Patanjali and Katayayana not merely presuppose a knowledge of writing in Panini but consider the use he made of writing as one of the chief means by which he had built up the technical

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1. Max Muller—'History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature'.



structure of his work."<sup>2</sup>

One of the arguments advanced by Max Muller was the absence in pre-classical Sanskrit of words which mean book, ink, paper and the like. Referring to *Vaidika* hymns, he states : "Where writing is known, it is impossible to compose a thousand hymns without bringing in some such words as writing, reading, pen, or paper. Yet there is not one single allusion in these hymns to anything concerned with writing."<sup>3</sup>

In the context of Max Muller's argument regarding the absence of the tradition of writing in ancient India, it has been mentioned<sup>4</sup> that the early Sanskrit word for ink—*mela*—is derived from the Greek *melan*—black—and the Sanskrit term for pen—*kalam*—from the Greek *kalamos*, suggesting that the use of these terms was acquired from the Greeks. Similarly the Sanskrit term *lipi* for script is thought to be of Persian origin so also the Sanskrit word for book—*pustaka*—which is stated to have been derived from the Persian word *post* meaning skin. The very name of the Kharoshthi script is believed to have meant "writing on the skin of an ass."<sup>5</sup>

Paper was in use in China in the second half of the first millennium B.C. more or less at the time of Panini but is believed to have been introduced into India in about 800 A.D. By the Muslims. This is despite the fact that association

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2. Goldstucker—'Panini, His Place in Sanskrit Literature'.

3. Max Muller—'History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature'.

4. c.f. J.P. Bannerjee : 'The Origin and Development of Hindu Writing' and T. Poonawala : 'The Art of Writing in Ancient India'.

5. Some scholars maintain that the Kharoshthi script originated either from the Sanskrit name of Kashgar, or from a word meaning 'ass-lip' or 'camel-lip' that is script



between India and China goes back to distant past.<sup>6</sup> Before the 'silk route' through Central Asia came into vogue, these contacts were through the Himalayan passes and the hilly tracts of Assam and Burma.<sup>7</sup> In Assam even the 'Early' Neolithic is believed to have some possible relation with south China and the mature Neolithic has definite south China affinities. The people of China are mentioned in the older passages of *Mahabharata* and there are glimpses of the Chinese world in Buddhist and Jain texts.<sup>8</sup> G.R. Kaye has pointed out that the Indian theories in the field of mathematics are such a close copy of Chinese mathematics that even the examples and mistakes of the Chinese manuals are carried over bodily in the Indian works.<sup>9</sup>

Brass seems to have been introduced into India in about 200 B.C. through Chinese trade.<sup>10</sup> Silk stuffs were known in

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from the land of the ass and the camel, Baluchistan and Bacteria.

6. Many works give details of early contact between India and China, the most important of these is J. Needham's *Science and Civilization in China*.
7. A Press Trust of India report published in *Daily Patriot*, New Delhi (1.1.1973) states : "Archaeological evidence in support of the statement in the Chinese documents of the second century B.C. by Chang Kien that a trade route lay through the Brahmaputra Valley and Burma to China before the Christian era may well be furnished by further excavations of the Ambari site in the heart of the city of Gauhati in Assam".
8. P.C.Bagchi : *India and China—A Thousand Years of Sino-Indian Cultural Relations*, Bombay. 1950.
9. G.R. Kaye : *Indian Mathematics*, Calcutta, 1915.
10. P.Ray (Ed.) : *History of Chemistry in Ancient and Medieval India*, Calcutta, 1956.



early Sanskrit literature as *chinamsukha*, and peach and pear two fruits introduced from China were known as *chinani* and *chinarajaputra*.<sup>11</sup> That India acquired from China before the Chirstian era less consequential articles like *sindura*—vermilion, and the slender bamboo used for making flute<sup>12</sup> but not paper or the art of writing does not lend weight to Max Muller's argument regarding the absence of writing in ancient India.<sup>13</sup>

The above view of Max Muller and some other Sanskritists was contested by Goldstucker, who devoted almost one-third of his long dissertation on 'Panini : His Place in Sanskrit Literature' to arguing that "Panini not only wrote but writing was a main element in the technical arrangement of his rules", and the practice of writing the Vedas "existed at and before the time of Panini."<sup>14</sup>

Goldstucker's main argument in support of Panini practising writing is the use by him of words like *lipikara* (a writer or engraver), *grantha* (book), *pattra* (leaf of a

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11. P. C. Bagehi : India and China—A Thousand Years of Cultural Relations.

12. Sanskrit word for slender bamboo for making flute is *kichara* derived from the ancient Chinese *ki-chok* and the Sanskrit word for *Sindurc* is stated to have come from the Chinese *ts'in-t'ung*.

13. P.K. Mukerji has observed that in the fifth century A.D., three thousand Indians were residing in the kingdom of Wei in northern China. The number is likely to be more in the earlier period when there were settled conditions and greater trading activity in India. (Indian Literature in China and the Far East).

14. Goldstucker : Panini, His Place in Sanskrit Literature.



book) *varna* (written word or sign) *lopa* (letter or word which is not seen), etc. Goldstucker also finds much weight in Weber's statement that two grammatical terms of Panini—*svaritet* and *udattet* are "founded on graphical appearance". He adds : "If then it becomes certain that Panini knew written accent signs, which were not pronounced, it will not be hazardous to put faith in the statement of *Kaiyyata* that *svarita*, which was intended as a mark of *adhikara*, was also a written sign, a perpendicular stroke, 'but had nothing to do with practical application'".

In order to show that writing was quite current in Panini's time Goldstucker refers to his rule (VI. 3.115) in which he informs us that the owners of cattle in his time were in the habit of marking their beasts on the ears, in order to make them recognizable. Besides signs like swastika, a ladle, a pearl, Panini mentions sign for eight (*ashta*) and five (*pancha*). Goldstucker's inference merely from this that writing was commonly practised during Panini's time has been regarded as somewhat far-fetched, because the marking of property in this manner started very early in human society. It was proto-writing and not writing in the sense discussed here.<sup>15</sup>

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15. Referring to proto-writing in pre-historic Iran, R.Ghrishman states : "As commerce expanded, the need arose to guarantee the contents of a jar or bale and to ensure that merchandise was delivered intact. To mark ownership, the seal was therefore brought into use, impressed on the lump of clay that stopped the mouth of a jar or was attached to a cord. Geometric decoration was at first the rule but this was soon supplemented by representation of human beings, plants and symbols, whose inspiration no doubt came from the painted decoration on pottery and, like that decoration, may possibly have had the significance of writing" ('Iran').



Writing was not a deliberate invention but the incidental by-product of private property.<sup>16</sup> Early in the history of man writing started with the recording of numbers of objects whether they were heads of cattle or baskets of grain. Where it was feared that the article in question might be forgotten, the number symbol was followed by a picture or a shorthand symbol of the particular object to indicate what was being counted or stored.<sup>17</sup> All this does not, however, indicate knowledge or writing of a script.

Goldstucker's<sup>18</sup> reference to *Mahabharata* condemning the writing of Veda as a proof that the offence of writing was being committed or his argument about Satpatha Brahmana (IV. 26.1) and Aitareya Brahmana (XI. 41.2) mentioning the *rishis*' "seeing" the Vedic hymns, does not prove that writing was in vogue in the time of Panini. There is however much weight in the following statement by Goldstucker :

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16. E.A. Spicer : "Writing was not a deliberate invention but the incidental by-product of a strong sense of private property." (Beginning of Civilization in Mesopotamia).

J.D. Bernal : "In this way writing, the greatest of human manual-intellectual invention, gradually emerged from accountancy." (Science in History).

Glyn Daniel : "The earliest written documents of the Sumerians are not literature ; they are no sagas or legends of creation. They are domestic or commercial documents such as lists of deliveries of bread and beer to various people, ration lists, lists of items delivered to temples." (The First Civilizations).

17. Henry Hodges : "Technology in the Ancient World".

18. Goldstucker : Panini, His Place in Sanskrit Literature.



"No one I believe, will easily imagine a civilized people who at the time of *mantras* (the period prior to that of the *sutras* and *brahmanas*) were such as to possess arts, sciences, institutions and vices of civilized life, golden ornaments, coats of mail, weapons of offence, the use of precious metals, of musical instruments, the fabrication of cars, and the employment of the needle....the knowledge of drugs and antidotes, the practices of medicine, and the computation of the division of time to a minute extent, including repeated allusions to the seventh season and intercalary month—no one I believe will easily imagine a people in such a state of civilization unacquainted with the art of writing, though no mention of the art be made in the hymns of the gods. And is it really plausible that even 600 or 700 years later, the greatest grammarian of India composed a most artificial and most scientific system of grammar, utterly ignorant of the simplest tool which might have assisted him in his work."<sup>19</sup>

There is no denying the fact that writing has a history of almost 3000 thousand years before Panini, so much so even the last important step in the history of writing—expressing single sounds by means of consonants and vowels—had taken place in Greece before the time of Panini. Sumerians developed a system of writing by about 3500 B.C.,<sup>20</sup> Later in Mesopotamia the Semitic Akkadians and Amorite Babylonians had a script.<sup>21</sup> Egyptians knew writing

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19. Goldstucker : Panini, His Place in Sanskrit Literature.

20. Thorkild Jacobson and others : Before Philosophy—Penguin Books.

21. I.J. Gelb : Old Akkadian Writing and Grammar, Chicago, 1952.



by 3000 B.C., and the Chinese script was initiated in the first half of the second millennium B.C. Throughout the millennium preceding Panini, writing continued to be developed in Iran, Mesopotamia and Western Turkey.<sup>22</sup> Assyrians, Hurrians, Hittites, Elamites and others knew writing and their centres of civilization, Nimrud, Elam, Susa, Babylon, Nineveh, Baghaz Koi were as much accessible from Gandhara, during Panini's times, as was Patliputra.<sup>23</sup> There is unmistakable evidence of India's cultural and economic relations with those areas in the period preceding and following Panini.

Strabo relates that followers of Alexander found a Babylonian trade emporium at Taxila which included a slave and marriage market. Berosus records that crowds of

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22. H.Frankfort : The Birth of Civilization in the Near East, London, 1951.

23. During those days the route from Gandhara and Taxila to Patliputra was not through the thick forested Gangetic valley but through the foothills of Himalayas where the rivers were easily fordable. This is also clear from the important republics mentioned by Panini in the foothills of Himalayas.

Rivers have been mentioned as the roads of the forest and no doubt that there was some riverine traffic from west to east during the winter months at least. Despite the references to the clearing of forests by burning, most of the Gangetic plains were most inhospitable during Panini's days and could not provide a regular route to the eastern parts of the country. Rig Veda describes *Agni* as the swallower of forests and he who leaves a black furrow. However, mythological references to the burning of forests such as that of Khandava forest by Krishna and the Pandavas are not many.



strangers, Indians amongst them, lived in Babylon. According to Athenaeus, Indians took part in the procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus in Alexandria in the third century B.C. Greek sources also stated that Indian mercenaries were found in the contingents of Darius the great, formed the light division of the army of Xerxes and shared the defeat of Darius III at Caugamela. Eusebius preserves the story of a party of Indian philosophers who conversed with Socrates. Philostratus relates that a brahmin boasted that he had read Euripides. Chrysostom remarked that the poetry of Homer was sung by Indians who had translated it into their own language.<sup>24</sup>

The pre-Paninian Indians seem to be great travellers. Aitareya Brahmana says : "There is no happiness for him who does not travel. Living with the same people, the best of men become sinners. Indra is a friend of travellers. Therefore wander." Aitareya Brahmana also says : "To lie down is to live in the age of *Kali*, to wake up is to live in the age of *Dvapara*, to stand up is to live in *Treta*. To fare forward is to live in the *Satyayuga*. Therefore move on "(7-15-4,5).

With all these contacts with the western world throughout the first millennium B.C., it appears incredible that none would have brought writing and script to India, particularly when there was large scale development of private property and trade during this period. The extent to which the trading communities had developed and prospered during the Buddhist period would itself establish the existence of writing in pre-Paninian India. No wonder there is reference to sixty-four scripts in the Buddhist texts.

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24. H.G. Rawlinson : Intercourse Between India and the Western World, Cambridge, 1916.



Kharoshthi script had been brought to western India a few centuries before it was used by Asoka for his inscriptions in that region. One of Panini's special rules (IV.1.49) refers to Yavnani which Katyayana and Patanjali explain as meaning the "writing of the Yavanas". According to Weber it means "the writing of the Greeks or Semites" and "a variety of the Semitic alphabet which previous to Alexander and previous to Panini became the type of Indian alphabet".

As one begins the study of Ashtadhyayi one encounters at the very outset what are called *Maheswara sutras* (aphorisms of Lord Maheswara i.e. Siva). These are fourteen in number, enumerate all the phonemes of the Sanskrit grammar and provide the basis for Panini's *pratyahara* system. The total number of phonemes enumerated in the *Maheswara sutra* is 42 and include repetition of some phonemes such as of phoneme 'h' which is repeated twice. By the time of Panini, sounds of alphabet had been arranged and classified phonetically. This could not possibly have been done without graphic representation.

Many scholars have in recent decades written to show that writing existed in India even in Rig Vedic times<sup>25</sup>. Kharoshti and Brahmi, two of the earliest known Indian scripts have been compared to show that the perfection of the Brahmi alphabet with its scientific and accurate orthography could have required centuries of development prior to the earliest Brahmi inscriptions. Suniti Kumar Chatterji holds that the proto brahmi developed out of the

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25. Scholars like B.R. Bhandarkar (Sir Ashutosh Mookerji Silver Jubilee Volume III), G.H. Ojha (*Prachina Lipi Mala*), R.B. Pandey (Indian Palaeography part I) and Laxman Shastri Joshi (*Vedic Sanskriti ka Vikas*) are of the opinion that some sort of writing was prevalent during Vedic times.



youngest form of Mohenjo Daro script and others have marshalled evidence to show that Brahmi arose out of *Vattezhuttu*, the ancient form to Tamil script.<sup>26</sup>

There appears to be conclusive evidence to show that writing existed during Panini's and earlier times. India was not lucky enough to invent baked clay tablets for writing. Though brittle these tablets of pre-historic Mesopotamia were indestructible while writing on wood or metal was not of such a permanent nature, particularly in tropical climate. From the wooden tablets with Sanskrit writing dating from 300 A.D. dug out of the desert sand in Chinese Turkistan it appears that writing in ancient India was on perishable

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26. Dr. S. Shankar Raju Naidu : "The two systems (The Brahmi and the Tamil scripts) could not have absolutely independent origin and development. One must have either developed from the other or both must have evolved from a common or more ancient system.....Thus we are left only with one possibility, Brahmi evolving its elaborate system out of the simpler alphabetical system of Tamil. This is confirmed by their common features, both negative as well as positive i.e. absence of 'f' and 'z' in Brahmi and Tamil on one side, and Brahmi possessing five nasals out of six of Tamil, nasal 'n' alone being left out which is not necessary phonetically for the Indo-Aryan languages and hence its absence in Brahmi." (A Comparative Study of Tamil and Nagri Alphabets—Tamil Culture. Madras, Jan-March, 1961).

Dr. Burnell a scholar of great repute in Palaeography maintains :

"It is impossible to suppose that the *Vattezhuttu* (ancient form of Tamil script) is derived from S. Ashokan characters, even if the conclusive argument of dissimilarity between the phonetic values of the corresponding letters be neglected."



material. This is borne out by the use of the word *grantha*—knot—for book. Birch bark or palm leaf manuscripts seem to have been placed between wooden boards and held in position by means of cord drawn through two holes and tied together with a knot. Strabo reported that Indians wrote on finely woven cloth.

If writing was known to Panini and in the earlier times, the question arises why he felt compelled to evolve a grammatical system which precluded writing for Ashtadhyayi and for the Sanskrit language itself. Studying Ashtadhyayi in isolation makes us lose sight of the socio-political aspects of the question. The re-establishment of oral tradition was a reactionary recourse against an environment in which the struggle between various heterogeneous groups and classes had acquired great ferocity. It appears necessary to examine here in brief the effect on Indian civilization of the oral tradition enforced by Panini, and why this marked a turning point in Indian history.

Plato was much concerned with the development of writing in his day and the revolution which it brought about.<sup>27</sup> He felt that oral tradition was done for and that poets the great rememberers were on their way out as leaders and will have to give way to writing philosophers. In the *Phaedrus* we are told that the Egyptian god Thoth invented writing and explained how greatly his invention would transform memory.

An oral culture, before writing developed, was heavily dependent on individual memory. This meant that poets could retain to themselves the functions of teachers and leaders of

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27. c.f. Northrop Frye : 'Communications'—The Listener, London, Vol. 84. No. 2154, dated July 9, 1970.



society, because verse is the easiest verbal pattern to remember. With writing and script prose develops. With prose philosophy changes from aphorism and proverb to continuous argument organised by logic and dialectics and history to a continuous narrative. Thus writing alone makes possible a pursuit of knowledge and a planned and systematic conquest of reality.

Emphasising the importance of writing in the development of science, Marshal McLuhan states : "Only the phonetic alphabet makes a break between the eye and the ear, between semantic meaning and visual code and thus only phonetic writing has the power to translate the men from the tribal to civilized sphere." James H. Breasted, the famous Orientalist once said : "The invention of writing and a convenient system of records on paper has had a greater role in uplifting the human race than any other intellectual achievement in the career of man." To this may be added a statement often quoted in anthropology that as language distinguishes men from animals so writing distinguishes civilized men from barbarians. Discussing the results of the invention of writing in ancient Mesopotamia, Thorkild Jacobson states : " With the advent of proto-literate period, the picture changes. Overnight as it were Mesopotamian civilization crystalises. The fundamental pattern, the controlling framework within which Mesopotamia is to live its life, formulate its deepest questions, evaluate itself, and evaluate the universe for ages to come, flashes into being, complete in all its main features."<sup>28</sup>

Recent studies in Linguistics have underlined the conservatism of words and the radical character of sentences. Noam Chomsky's work, which is concerned with sentences,

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28. Thorkild Jacobson and others : Before Philosophy, Penguin books.



underlines that the words available to us at any time are finite while the number of potential sentences we can create with them is infinite, and more importantly, sentences 'do things' to the words they use, forcing new and sometimes revealing interpretations of reality. They can formulate assertions about the world which question tired assumptions and suggest new truths. Prose sentences are not only responsible for the creativity of language but also of life. Poetry is irrational as it does not conform with the ordering men agree upon seeing in the environment. Scientific argument is rational in this sense and only prose can be vehicle of this. Shelley meant this when he said "Poetry is something not subject to the active powers of the mind". Plato in his *Ion* has referred to the special irrationality of poetry. Northrop Frye has shown how written literature gives man a spatial focus, a kind of projected total recall to store experience. "The spatial focus it provides makes it possible to return to the experience, a repetition of the kind that underlines all genuine education. The document is also the focus of a community, the community of readers which has natural tendency to expand as a whole."

Northrop Frye quoted McLuhan to emphasise that the technical efficiency of the Western society has been possible because of the domination of writing and printing in that society, which also created all the conditions of freedom within that society, democratic government, universal education, tolerance of dissent, and (because book individualizes its audience) the sense of importance of privacy, leisure and freedom of movement.<sup>29</sup>

The oral tradition in ancient Indian society not only made learning and knowledge the close preserve of a rigid

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29. Northrop Frye : 'Communications'—The Listener, London Vol. 84, No. 2154, dated July 9, 1970.



caste, it also created a social order which curbed urban life and trade for many centuries to come. It discouraged emergence of a strong government except for short periods. This had disastrous effect for India because this retarded the building of public irrigation works necessary for tropical agriculture, thus depriving the Indian feudalism of the needed element of growth. This prevented the proper development of productive resources, trade and urban life, turning most parts of India into a conglomeration of stagnant villages whose chief intellectual product the brahmin was stamped with incurable rusticity.<sup>30</sup>

The manner in which India was torn into fragments and prolonged stagnation was brought about in Indian society is evidenced by post-Paninian Indian history. It not only resulted in the ossification of scientific thinking but several technical achievements of the earlier period were lost and Indian feudal society, inferior economically and militarily as it was, suffered a serious set-back.

The advent of organised religious faiths with hierarchic priesthood occurred in many regions of the world, particularly in the early centuries of the Christian era. However, in India, the priestly communities consolidated themselves into a rigid and closed caste to seize a position of dominance over other sections of the community. In this the oral tradition which Panini's Astadhyayi sought to perpetuate was the major weapon.

Sanskrit language suffered from oral tradition in one more significant manner. Its monopolistic association with a class that had no direct interest in techniques of production, manual operation, trade agreements, contracts or survey, prevented its many sided development. If the study of linguistic phenomenon in India has remained in the same

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30. c.f. D.D.Kosambi : An Introduction to the Study of Indian History.



position for the last twenty centuries, it is because the conditions created by the oral tradition always tried to prevent the release of internal forces that could make life moved forward.



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This is an academic work by a writer who is not an academician, even though he taught journalism for sometime when the Department of Journalism of Punjab University migrated to New Delhi from Lahore in 1947.

Mr. Narula wrote short stories in Urdu and Hindi in nineteen forties. In fifties he wrote a novel in Hindi about the situation which led to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. In sixties he wrote another novel in Hindi depicting life in Delhi in November 1962, when Chinese armies had reached Assam foothills. Critical reviews of these novels mentioned that future historians would have a better understanding of these times from these novels than from other publications.

During this period he also wrote a treatise of literary criticism in Hindi and works on Indian social history and linguistics. In 2006 he completed a trilogy in English describing India's gory journey to Independence and fractured destiny of the Indian people thereafter. His work of literary criticism about the illusion and reality of creativity and originality is nearing completion.

Mr. Narula is in his ninetyfourth year. He retired from Press Information Bureau over thirtyfive years ago.



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